

S E R M O N S  
A N D  
D I S C O U R S E S.  
U P O N T H E

*Most Important and Interesting Subjects.*

By the late REVEREND  
MR. EBENEZER ERSKINE,  
Minister of the Gospel at STIRLING.

I. GOD'S LITTLE REMNANT  
KEEPING THEIR GAR-  
MENTS CLEAN IN AN  
EVIL DAY.

II. THE BACKSLIDER CHA-  
RACTERISED.

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APPLIED.

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I N T W O V O L U M E S.

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V O L U M E S E C O N D.

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L O N D O N:

Sold by A. MILLAR, J. TONSON, M. COOPER,  
D. MIDWINTER, and R. STEEL.

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M, DCC, LXXVII.





# T H E C O N T E N T S.

## I. **G**OD's little remnant keeping their garments clean in an evil day.

REV. iii. 4.

*Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

## II. The backslider characterised.

JOHN vi. 66.

*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.*

## III. The wind of the Holy Ghost blowing upon the dry bones in the valley of vision.

EZEK. xxxvii. 9.

*Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon the slain, that they may live.*

## IV. The King held in the galleries.

CANT. vii. 5.

*The King is held in the galleries.*

## V. The groans of believers under their burdens.

2 COR. v. 4.

*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*

## VI. The

## VI. The believer exalted in imputed righteousness.

PSAL. lxxxix. 16.

*In thy name shall they rejoice all the day long: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

## VII. The humble soul the peculiar favourite of Heaven.

PSAL. cxxxviii. 6.

*Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.*

## VIII. Christ in the believer's arms.

LUKE ii. 28.

*Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.*

## IX. A discourse on the throne of grace.

PSAL. lxxxix. 14.

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*

## X. The assurance of faith opened and applied.

HEB. x. 22.

*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*

SERMONS.





# S E R M O N S.

Christ in the believer's arms.

A

S E R M O N preached at the celebration of the  
L O R D's supper in Strathmiglo, May 10. 1724.

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Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?  
and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

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LUKE ii. 28.

*Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.*

**I**N the preceding context, from vers. 25th and downward, we have the following particulars recorded concerning Simeon, of whom my text speaks. 1. We have an account of his character, vers. 25. He was 'a just and devout man;' that is, one that made conscience of the duties of the first and se-

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cond table of the law ; just towards man, and devout towards God. Note, That there are no barren branches in Christ the true vine: ' They that have believed in him,' will ' be careful to maintain good works,' and will ' have a respect to all his commandments.' Another part of Simeon's character is, that he ' waited for the consolation of Israel ;' that is, for Christ the promised Messiah, who is, has been, and will be the matter and ground of consolation to all believers, in all ages and periods of time ; and ' blessed are all they that wait for him,' for ' they shall not be confounded.' Another part of his character is, that ' the Holy Ghost was upon him ;' and that both as a Spirit of prophecy, and a Spirit of holiness. It is the privilege of all true believers, that they have ' the spirit of glory, and of God resting upon them,' 1 Pet. iv. 14. 2. We have here a promise made to Simeon, ver. 26. ' And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.' In this promise Simeon saw him by the eye of faith, before he saw him by the eye of his body. Note, That faith's views of Christ in the promise, makes way for the sensible manifestations of him here, and the immediate enjoyment of him hereafter : Eph. i. 13. ' After that ye believed, ye were sealed.' 3. We have the time when, and the place where Simeon had this promise actually accomplished unto him, vers. 27. ; it was in the temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus, ' to do for him after the custom of the law.' They who would have a meeting with Christ, must wait upon him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment : for it is there that ' every one doth speak of his

his glory' 4. In the words of my text we have Simeon's welcome and kindly reception he gave to the Messiah, when he met him in the temple, 'Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.'

Where notice, 1. Simeon's privilege, 'He took him up in his arms,' viz. in the arms of his body: but at the same time he embraced him also in the arms of faith, and took him up as the salvation of God; otherwise he could never have blessed God for him, as the promised Messiah, 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.' I am ready to believe, that there were many who got Christ in their arms, when he was an infant, who never had been formed in their hearts: but Simeon got him both in the arms of his body and soul at once. Some may be ready to think, O what a happy man was Simeon, and what a sweet arms-full had he, when he had the great Messiah, Immanuel, God-man, in his bodily arms! It is true indeed this was a privilege; but yet his greatest privilege was, that he had him clasped in his arms of faith. And though now his body be out of our reach, yet still there is access to embrace him in a way of believing: and this is what every true believer hath the experience of, either in less or more.

2. In the words we have Simeon's gratitude for this privilege: 'He blessed God.' He is in a praising frame, being 'filled with joy and peace in believing.' And his heart is so big with praise, that he wishes immediately to be away to the land of praise, where he might get a well-tuned harp put into his hand, and join with the Hallelujahs of the redeemed above: 'Now,' says he, 'lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.' So much for explication of the words.



## S E R M O N S.

Before I proceed to the doctrine I intend to insist upon, we may observe, from the text and context, 1. That God's word of promise to his people is sure, and never fails of accomplishment. Simeon here had got a promise from the Lord, 'that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ;' and accordingly my text gives an account of its accomplishment. O Sirs, venture on God's word of promise, and look on it as the best security; for 'faithful is he that hath promised:' his naked word is as good as payment; he never brake his word to man; yea, 'it is impossible for him to lie.' 2. That believers, they will find God not only as good, but better than his word, when he comes, in his own time, to make out his promise to them. Simeon had a promise, that he should only see the Messiah before he died; but we find, that he gets more than a bare sight of him, for he gets him in his arms and heart at once. 3. That a true believer loves Christ so well, that he would put him in his very heart. Simeon here takes Christ in his arms, and lays him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could bring him. So the spouse, Song i. 13. 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.' O! the mutual endearments betwixt Christ and believers; he carries them as lambs in his bosom, and they carry the Lamb of God in their bosom, Is. xl. 1. 4. That faith's embraces of Christ are so sweet, that they render the prospect of death not only easy, but desirable to the believer. Simeon here, when he gets Christ in his arms, is content that the union betwixt his soul and body should be dissolved. But passing all these, the doctrine I design to speak to at the time is this.

Doct.

DOCT. *That faith's embraces of Christ fills the mouth with praise.* Simeon took him in his arms, and blessed God; where, as I told you, it was the arm of faith clasped about Christ, that did fill him with praise and gratitude, taking him up as the Lord's Messiah.

In prosecuting this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance,

I. Speak a little concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ.

II. Notice some of these songs of praise, which readily fills the believer's heart and mouth, when he gets Christ in his arms.

III. Whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ do thus fill the heart and mouth with praise.

IV. Apply the whole.

I. As to the *first*, viz. *concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ*, I would shew, 1. What it is. 2. What sort of an arm it is. 3. How it embraces Christ.

For the *first*, I have not time at present to open up nature of faith at any length; all I shall do, is only, in a few particulars, to shew what it supposes and implies.

I. then, It plainly supposes, that there is a gift or grant of Christ made to sinners, in the free offer and call of the gospel. Receiving necessarily supposes a giving; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or vitious intromission. John vi. 32. faith Christ there to a promiscuous multitude, the greatest part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the sequel of the chapter. 'My Father giveth you the true

‘bread from heaven:’ where it is plain, that giving and offering are much the same thing; with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners, is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that ‘God hath given the earth ‘to the sons of men;’ that is, he made a grant of it unto them, to be used and possessed by them. And, by virtue of this grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession: and the foundation of this was, that God had *given* or granted ‘the earth ‘to the sons of men.’ In like manner, God had *gifted* or granted ‘his only begotten Son,’ John iii. 16. For what end? ‘That whosoever believeth in ‘him,’ or takes possession of him by faith, ‘should ‘not perish, but have everlasting life.’ It is true indeed, the eternal destination, the purchase and application of redemption is peculiar only to the elect: but the revelation, gift, and offer, is common to all the hearers of the gospel; insomuch that, as the great Mr Rutherford expresses it, the reprobate have as fair a revealed warrant to believe as the elect have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound; and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name. So that none have reason to say, The call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ; for it is ‘unto you, O men,’ that we ‘call,’ and ‘our voice is to the sons of men,’ Prov. viii. 4. We have God’s permission to preach this gospel, and to make offer of this Christ *to every creature* sprung of Adam, Mark xvi. 15.; and the event of the  
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publication of this gospel among sinners follows in the next words, 'He that believeth' this gospel, 'shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel, for want of a full warrant to embrace a Saviour: no, no, Sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own heads; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation. God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him: 'I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded;'—therefore 'will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh,' Prov. i., 24. 26.

2. This embracing of Christ supposes the knowledge of Christ; for a man, when he believes, doth not embrace a blind bargain. Now, there is a two-fold knowledge that faith necessarily supposes, *viz.* a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of Christ.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, it supposes the knowledge of ourselves, or a conviction and discovery of that sin and misery, thralldom and bondage, we are reduced unto, by the breach of the first covenant. The law must be our school-master, to bring us to Christ. Without a discovery of sin and misery by the law, in less or more, the sinner will never flee to him, who is 'the end of the law for righteousness.' The man, in this case, is just like a mariner at sea, sailing upon a broken and shattered bottom, not far from a great rock: so long as he apprehends his vessel to be good enough, or sufficient to carry him to land, he will still cleave to it, refusing to throw himself upon the rock for safety; but when the wind and waves beat upon the ship, and

break her in pieces, then, and never till then, will he cast himself upon the rock. So is it here: while the sinner apprehends he can do well enough upon the broken bottom of a covenant of works, his own doings, and good meanings, he will never betake himself to Christ the Rock of ages; but when a hail-storm sweeps down the refuge of lies, and lets him see, that if he stay on this bottom of the law, he must inevitably sink into the bottom of hell, then, and never till then, doth the man cry with the jailer, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' The same we see in Paul, Rom. vii. 9. 'I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' And, Gal. ii. 19. 'I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' Thus, I say, embracing of Christ necessarily supposeth the knowledge and conviction of our lost condition by the law, or covenant of works.

2dly, It supposeth or implieth a knowledge of Christ, as the blessed remedy of God's providing. And there is so much of this goes into the very nature of faith, that we find it frequently called by the name of *knowledge*, Is. liii. 11. John xvii. 3. And this knowledge of Christ is not a bare speculative knowledge of him, attained by external revelation, or common illumination; for there are many learned unbelievers: but it is an internal saving knowledge of him, which comes by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, accompanying the external discoveries of him in the gospel, which goes in to the nature of true faith; 'God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,' must shine in our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,

Cor. iv. 6. He, as it were, strikes out a window in the man's breast, which before was like a dungeon of hellish darkness, and makes a beam of saving, humbling, and captivating light to shine into it. And thus the man is 'called out of darkness into a marvellous light.' And this light is called *the light of life*, because with it, and by it, a new principle of life is implanted in the soul: Eph. ii. 1. 'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.'

3. This embracing of Christ bears in it the soul's firm and steady assent unto the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ; so that the man cannot but join issue with Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel-revelation is not a bare historical assent, which leans only to the testimony of man; for thus reprobates may and do believe: but it is such an assent, as is bottomed upon the testimony of God, or his record concerning Christ in the gospel. Hence it is called a 'believing the record of God,' a 'setting to the seal that God is true.' Faith that is of a saving nature, will not venture upon any thing less than the credit and authority of God himself: 'Thus saith the Lord,' is the ground and reason of the soul's assent. And this is a firmer bottom than heaven and earth; for 'the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; righteousness' being 'the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.' So that he will as soon cease to be God, as cease to make good his word, which is ratified by his oath, these being the 'two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.'



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4. Hereupon follows the receiving, embracing, or applying act of faith. Christ being known in the light of the word and Spirit, and the truth of the revelation concerning him assented to; the soul goes a degree further, and, as it were, takes him home into its arms and bosom, as a remedy every way suited unto the soul's malady and misery. This embracing and appropriating act of faith is just, as it were, the soul's echo unto the call and offer of the gospel. I offer him for *thy Saviour*, saith God; and I embrace him as *my Saviour*, saith faith: I offer him for *wisdom*, to thee who art a fool, says God; and I embrace him for *my wisdom*, says faith: I offer him for *thy righteousness* and *justification*, who art a condemned sinner, says God; and I embrace him as *the Lord my righteousness*, saith faith: I offer him for *thy sanctification*, who art a polluted filthy sinner, says God; and I embrace him for *my sanctification*, says faith: I offer him for *thy redemption*, who art a lawful captive, saith God; and I embrace him for *my redemption*, and *my all*, saith faith. Thus, I say, the soul echoes to the voice of God in the gospel, when it believes, much like that, Zech xiii. 9. 'I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' And this is what we call *the assurance of faith*, or an *appropriating persuasion*, whereby the soul, as it were, takes seisin and infestment upon Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase as its own, upon the ground of the gospel offer and promise. What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul brings home to itself in particular; and, just like Simeon, takes Christ in its arms and bosom, saying, with Thomas, *My Lord, and my God*. I do not say, that the first language of  
faith

faith is, That Christ died for me, or, I was elected from eternity: no; but the language of faith is, God offers a slain and crucified Saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour; and in my taking or embracing of him as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before. I shall only add, that this appropriating act doth inseparably attend the knowledge and assent before mentioned; and that they are all jointly comprised in the general nature of saving faith; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction as to priority or posteriority of time.

Now, this saving faith, which I have been describing in its essential acts, is variously expressed in the sacred oracles of the scriptures of truth; from which fountain alone our notions of it are to be drawn: 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,' Is. viii. 20.

1. then, It is called a *receiving of Christ*: John ii. 22. 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' Col. ii. 6. 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' This expression of faith leads us to conceive of Christ under the notion of a *gift*, freely offered and presented to us in the gospel, and bears an appropriation in the very nature of it; for where a man receives a gift, he takes it as his own, and it becomes his in possession.

2. It is sometimes expressed by a *resting or rolling ourselves on the Lord*: Psal. xxxvii. 5. 'Commit thy way

‘ way unto the Lord,’ or, as it reads in the margin, ‘ Roll thy way upon the Lord ;’ and, vers. 7. ‘ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.’ Which expression may either allude unto a poor weary man, who is like to sink under a load, his legs not able to bear him ; he leans or rests himself upon a strong rock, which he is confident will not sink underneath. Faith, in its justifying act, it is not a working, but a resting grace. O ! says the poor soul, I am like to sink into the depths of hell, under the weight of mine iniquities, which have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear : but I lay my help where God has laid it ; O ! this is my rest. Hence he that believes is said to *enter into his rest*. Or this resting of the soul on Christ may allude to one’s resting upon a bond, or good security granted to him by a sponable person ; he takes it as security to himself, and rests on the fidelity of him that grants it. So in believing we rest upon the veracity of a promising God in Christ, as a sufficient security for the blessing promised.

3. It is called a *flying for refuge to the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18. In which there is an allusion to the man-slayer under the law, who fled from the avenger of blood. The poor pursued man, he was not to turn aside to any of the cities of Israel ; he was not to flee to his own home ; yea, he was not to flee to the temple, and to offer sacrifice ; but he was to flee straight to the city of refuge. So in believing the soul is never to rest in any thing on this side of Christ, who is ‘ an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest :’ the hail shall sweep away every other refuge. But as the man-slayer, when once within the gates of the city of refuge, was in such safety,



safety, that he could freely speak with the avenger of blood, without any manner of danger; so the soul that is by faith got under the covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ, is in such absolute safety, that it dares speak to the law, and all its pursuers, saying, with the apostle, Rom. viii. 33. 34. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,' &c.

4. It is called a *submitting to the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 3. A very strange expression! Shall it be thought submission for a condemned criminal to accept of pardon from his prince? or for a person that is stark naked, to accept of a garment? The expression plainly points out the arrogant pride of the heart of man. We are, as it were, mounted upon an imaginary throne of our own righteousness by the law, thinking, with Laodicea, that we are rich, and stand in need of nothing, disdaining to be obliged to another for righteousness: but now when a man believes, all these towering imaginations are levelled; he is emptied of himself, and made to 'count all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith,' Phil. iii. 8. 9. The language of the soul, submitting to the righteousness of God, is that of the church, Is. xlv. 4. 'Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'

5. It is called a 'taking hold of God's covenant,' Is. lvi. 4. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is like a rope cast into a company of drowning men; God comes by his ministers,

ministers, crying to sinking sinners, who are going down to the bottomless gulf of his wrath, 'Take hold 'of my covenant,' and of him whom I have 'given 'for a covenant of the people;' and I will 'deliver' you 'from going down to the pit.' Now, when a man believes, he, as it were, takes hold of this rope of salvation, this covenant of grace and promise; and, like Jeremiah, when the cords were let down to the pit by Ebed-melech, puts them under his arm-holes, and lays his weight upon them. The poor soul, in this case, says with David, speaking of the covenant of grace, 'This is all my salvation;' here will I lay the weight of my sinking and perishing soul.

6. It is called a 'yielding ourselves unto the Lord,' 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Hezekiah, writing to the degenerate tribes, exhorts them to 'yield themselves unto 'the Lord;' or, as it is in the Hebrew, 'Give the 'hand unto the Lord;' alluding to men who have been at variance, when they come to an agreement, they strike hands one with another, in token of friendship. The great God, the offended Majesty of heaven, comes in a gospel-dispensation, stretching out his hand all the day long to rebellious sinners, crying, 'Behold me, behold me;' cast away your rebellious arms, and be at peace with me. Now, when a sinner believes, he, as it were, strikes hands with the Lord, according to that, Is. xxvii. 5. 'Let him take hold 'of my strength, that he may make peace with me, 'and he shall make peace with me.'

7. It is called an 'opening of the heart to Christ,' Cant v. 2. Rev. iii. 20. Acts xvi. 14. This expression imports, that as the sinner's heart is by nature shut and bolted against the Lord; so when he believes,

Sees, the 'everlasting doors' of the understanding, will, and affections, are 'lifted up to the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle,' Psal. xxiv. 7.

8. It is sometimes called a buying, Is. lv. 1. 'Buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' Rev. iii. 18. 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,' &c. This buying does not import such a commutation, as if we were to give to God an equivalent for his grace; for it is a buying 'without money, and without price;' it is a giving of poverty for riches, emptiness for fulness, deformity for beauty, guilt for righteousness, pollution for holiness, bondage for liberty; in a word, buying in Christ's market is nothing else but taking: Rev. xxii. 17. 'Who-soever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely.'

Many other expressions the Spirit of God makes use of in the word, to hold out the nature of faith. Sometimes it is called, 'the substance of things hoped for,' Heb. xi. 1.; because faith, as it were, doth realize and substantiate the promise. Just like a man looking to bonds, charters, or any other securities; he will say, There is my substance, and all my stock, though they be but bits of paper. So the believer, when looking on Christ, his righteousness and fulness, as held forth in the free promise of the gospel, will be ready to say, There is my substance and everlasting all: with David, he 'rejoiceth in God's word' of promise, 'as one that findeth great spoil;' yea, it is 'better' to him 'than gold, yea, than much fine gold.' Again, it is called, in the same verse, 'the evidence of things not seen.' The word in the original rendered 'evidence,' signifies to convince to



a demonstration. Faith acting upon the promise, convinceth the soul of the reality of things invisible, as if they were before him, and he saw them with his bodily eyes. And this sight of faith is not such a sight as Balaam got of Christ, when he said, 'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh.' He saw him by the spirit of prophecy, as the Redeemer of Israel; but not by the spirit of faith, as 'his Redeemer,' as Job, chap. xix. 2. Balaam saw him, without any personal interest; but Job saw him as his own Redeemer, with appropriation: 'I know,' saith he, 'that my Redeemer liveth.' Again, in the 13th verse of the same chapter, faith is called an 'embracing of the promises,' Heb. xi. 13. The word in the original signifies a kindly salutation or kissing; being an allusion to two dear friends, who, when they meet, clasp one another in their arms, in a most loving and affectionate manner. The grace of the promise embraces the soul, and then the soul embraces the promise, and hugs it, and Christ in it, in his arms. The reverse of this is the case of the presumptuous hypocrite, who in some sort embraces the promise indeed; but the special grace of the promise not having embraced him, he is like a man taking a tree in his arms, he embraces the tree, but not the tree him.

Again, faith is sometimes called an 'eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of man,' John vi. 53.; because faith makes use of and applies, Christ for the life, nourishment, and sustentation of the soul; just as a man makes use of the meat and drink that is set before him, for his bodily nourishment. Let a man have never such a rich feast before

fore him, yet he will inevitably starve, unless he apply it, and make use of it: so, without faith's application of Christ and his fulness, we inevitably die and perish. And O how sad to perish in the midst of plenty!

*Lastly*, Faith is called a 'trusting in the name of the Lord,' Is. l. 10. and xxvi. 3. We all know what it is to trust in a man of honesty and integrity. When he passes his word, we make no doubt, and have no hesitation concerning his performing what he hath promised: so faith takes the promise, and trusts the veracity of the promiser; it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 20. 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.' The perfections of God, such as his power, holiness, goodness, but especially his veracity, are pawned in the promise, as grounds of trust. Hence we are to trust in his NAME: and when we trust in him, and stay ourselves upon him, we are still to take him up as our God in Christ; for we can never trust him, while we take him up as an enemy.

The *second* thing proposed, for opening up the first general head in the method, was, to give you some of the qualities of this arm of faith.

1. It is a leaning and a staying arm: Cant. viii. 5. 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' Is. xxvi. 3. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.' It is the office of faith to underprop the soul, when it is ready to be overwhelmed with the burden of sin and sorrow, darkness and desertion: Psal xxvii. 13. 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness

'goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' It leans and stays itself on him, who is 'the strength of Israel,' even 'the man of God's right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself.' And thus it bears up the soul under the heaviest pressures.

2. It is a winning and a gaining arm. The apostle speaks of 'winning Christ,' and 'being found in him.' And it is said of the wise merchant, that 'he went and sold all that he had,' that he might 'buy' or win 'the pearl of great price;' and this pearl can be won no otherwise but by receiving it, John i. 12. Yea, faith is such a winning grace, that it is taking, ever receiving out of Christ's fulness, 'grace for grace;' it digs into the Rock of ages, and makes up the poor soul with unsearchable riches; it maintains a traffic with heaven, travels to the land afar off, and returns richly freighted and loaded with the commodities of that better country.

3. It is a very wide and capacious arm. It is not little that will fill the arm of faith: the whole world, and all the fulness thereof, cannot fill the arm of faith: no, no: it flings them away like dung, that it may get its arm filled with a God in Christ: 'I count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,' Phil. iii. 8. Yea, I may add, that heaven, and all the glories of Immanuel's land, bear no bulk in the arm of faith without Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells: Psal. lxxiii. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'

4. It is a most tenacious arm; its motto may be **GRIPPEFAST.** As the arm of faith is wide, and takes in



so much; so it keeps, and gripes fast what it gets: Cant. iii. 4. 'I held him,' says the spouse, 'and would not let him go.' Faith is such a tenacious grace, that it will wrestle with an omnipotent God, and refuse to yield to him, when he seems to shake himself loose of its gripes, as we see in the case of Jacob. Gen. xxxii. 24. and downward. There Jacob gets a gripe by faith of the Angel of the covenant: the Angel says unto him, 'Let me go, Jacob.' A very strange word, for the Creator to become a suppliant to his own creature! Well, what says Jacob's faith to this proposal? 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' As if he had said, "Let the day break, and let it pass on, let the night come, and let the day break again; it is all one; lean Jacob and the living God shall not part without the blessing." To this purpose is that of the prophet, Hof. xii. 3, 4. 'By his strength,' viz, by the strength of faith in prayer, 'he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him.' O Sirs! try to follow the example of Jacob, and you shall be 'fed with the heritage of Jacob your father,' Is. lviii. 14. Thus, I say, faith is a most griping and tenacious arm. The first gripe that faith takes of Christ is so fast, that it never quits gripe of him again through eternity: it unites the soul to Christ; and the union is so close and intimate through faith, that the man becomes 'one body' and 'one spirit' with him, and so indissolvable, as that 'neither death, nor life, nor things to come, shall ever be able to make a separation.'

5. Hence it follows, that faith is a very bold and confident

confident arm. It hath a great deal of assurance in it; for it will maintain its claim to Christ, upon the ground of the new covenant, even when hell and earth, sense and reason, and all seems to be against it; it will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay itself upon its God and covenant, even when the poor soul walks in the darkness of desertion, in the darkness of temptation, in the darkness of affliction, yea, in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Abraham's faith had much opposition to grapple with, when he got the promise of Isaac, and in him of the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the world should be blessed; yet such was the confidence and assurance of his faith, that 'he staggered not at the promise.' The language of faith is, 'When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.—He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness,' Mic. vii. 8, 9. Yet I would not be here mistaken, as if the poor believer did not apprehend Christ and the promise with a tottering and trembling hand; nay, the believer, thro' the prevalency of unbelief, is many times brought so low, as to cry with the Psalmist, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.' Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. But let it be remembered, that this was not his faith, but his infirmity, through prevailing unbelief, which made him thus to stagger; for, let faith but get rid of unbelief, let it get up its head, and allow it to speak its proper language, its dialect will be, 'Abba, Father,'

Rom.

Gen. viii. 15.; and, 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting.'

6. It is a very patient and waiting arm; for 'he that believeth, shall not make haste,' Is. xxviii. 16. Faith, although it firmly believes the accomplishment of the promise, yet it will not limit the holy One of Israel as to the time of its accomplishment: 'I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him,' Is. viii. 17. 'The vision is for an appointed time;' and therefore, says faith, 'though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry,' Hab. ii. 3. Faith will not draw rash or desperate conclusions, because the Lord hides or defers his visits: no; but it looks to God's word of promise, and grounds its confidence there, saying, with the church, 'I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me,' Mic. vii. 7.

7. Faith is a feeding arm, it feeds upon the carcase of the Lion of the tribe of Judah; and thus, like Samson, gets its 'meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.' Hence, as you heard, it is called an 'eating of the flesh,' and a 'drinking of the blood of Christ:' and in this view Christ is presented to us in the sacrament of the supper, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' There was a part of the sacrifices under the law reserved for food to the priests, when the rest was burnt upon the altar: believers are spiritual priests unto God, and they live upon the altar, and that blessed passover that was sacrificed for us.

8. It



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8. It is not an idle, but a working arm. Indeed, in its justifying act it is not a working, but only a taking, or a resting arm : it is like the beggar's hand, that takes the alms, without working a turn for it. In justification, faith is a passive or recipient kind of an instrument. It is such an active arm in sanctification, that it purifies the heart, and actuates and animates all the other graces of the Spirit ; it works by love, it works by repentance, it works by hope, it works by patience, it works by obedience ; and ' faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit is dead.' In a word, the whole of gospel-obedience is ' the obedience of faith ;' and the obedience that flows not from faith is but ' dead works,' which cannot be acceptable to a ' living God.'

9. Faith is a fighting and warlike arm : Heb. xi. 34. it is said of the worthies there, that they, by faith, ' waxed valiant in fight :' yea, it is not only a fighting, but a victorious arm ; for it ' puts to flight ' the armies of the aliens.' It is by faith leaning on the arm of Omnipotency, that the believer's bow abides in its strength, and the arms of his hands become strong, to break bows of steel in pieces. By faith we quench the fiery darts of hell, and trample upon the powers of darkness ; by faith we overcome the world, and set the moon under our feet. Yea, this gallant grace of faith, it will take up the spoils of Christ's victory over sin and Satan, hell and death, and triumph in his triumphs, even while it is in the field of battle, and seemingly overcome by the enemy. ' Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.' My head and general, faith, has overcome, and I have already overcome in him ;



men; for 'we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us,' Rom. viii. 37.

16. *Lastly*, Faith is a saving arm: 'He that believeth, shall be saved.' There is an inseparable connection established, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation, John iii. 16. 'Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' Although indeed there is no connection of casualty, yet there is an undoubted connection of order. Faith cannot but carry salvation along with it, seeing it takes up Christ the salvation of God in its arms, as you see Simeon did.

The *third* thing proposed here was, to inquire how this arm of faith doth embrace Christ? In general, I answer, it embraces him just as God offers him in the gospel. There is a manifest proportion betwixt God's offer, and faith's reception of Christ; which I shall illustrate in the four particulars following.

1. Christ is freely offered in the gospel, Is. lv. 1. Rev. xxii. 17.; so faith embraces him as the free gift of God. There is a natural propensity in the heart of man, to give something or other of our own, by way of exchange or equivalent, for Christ, and the blessings of his purchase. Proud nature cannot think of being so much beholden to God, as to take Christ and salvation from him for nothing at all; and therefore it would always be bringing in this or the other qualification, as a price in its hand to fit it for Christ: I must be so penitent, so humble, so clean and holy, before I come to Christ, and then I will be welcome, he will pardon and save me. But, Sirs, whatever you may think of it, this is but a tangle of the old covenant of works, and all one as if a man should

should say, I must first heal myself before I go to the physician, I will first wash myself clean before I go to the fountain opened up for sin and for uncleanness. Beware of this, for it is a secret subverting of the order and method God hath established in the covenant of grace, this being the very money and price which he forbids us to bring to the market of free grace. Faith argues at another rate in its embracing of Christ: O! says the poor soul, I am a diseased sinner, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; and this qualifies me for the Physician of souls: I am a polluted sinner, black like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard; and therefore I will go to the fountain: I am naked; and therefore I will take the white raiment offered me, to cover the shame of my nakedness: I am blind; and therefore I will take the eye-salve, which recovers sight to the blind. Thus, I say, faith embraces Christ as he is freely offered.

2. Christ is fully and wholly offered in the gospel; and accordingly faith embraces him wholly, without dividing him. I own indeed, that the first sight of faith is to Christ as a Saviour, Christ as a priest, fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, and thereby bringing in everlasting righteousness, this being the only thing that can answer the present strait and necessity of the soul, under the awful apprehensions of vindictive justice and wrath; and therefore thither it flies for refuge, in the first act of believing. But now, although faith at first fixes upon Christ as a priest; yet at the same time it embraces him as a prophet, submitting unto his instruction, and subjects itself unto him as a king, receiving the law from his mouth: O! says the soul, 'I am more brutish  
than

than any man, and have not the understanding of  
 'a man;' but this Saviour 'has pity on the ignorant,  
 and them that are out of the way:' he opens the  
 book, and looses the seven seals thereof; and there-  
 fore I will sit down at his feet, and receive the  
 whole revelation of the mind and will of God from  
 him: I am a poor captive and vassal of hell; 'Other  
 lords have had dominion over me, but' now 'I will  
 make mention of his name:' he is 'my judge, my  
 law-giver, and my king,' even he that 'saves me.'  
 Thus, I say, the arm of faith embraces a whole Christ.  
 There is nothing of Christ, says the soul, that I can  
 want; I must have him all, and have him all as mine  
 own, as my prophet, my priest, and my king. And  
 herein the faith of the hypocrite or temporary believer  
 comes short of the faith of God's elect. The hypo-  
 crite, he halves Christ, or else inverts the order of  
 his office, in his way of receiving him: either he re-  
 ceives him as a Saviour, only to keep him out of hell,  
 but waves the acceptance of him as a king to rule him;  
 or else he professedly subjects himself unto Christ's  
 authority as a king and a law-giver, hoping, upon  
 that score, that Christ will save him, by his blood and  
 righteousness, as a priest; and so thereby makes up  
 the defects of his lame obedience; which is, upon  
 the matter, to 'put a piece of new cloth unto an old  
 garment,' whereby 'the rent is made worse.'

3. God gives Christ cordially and affectionately in  
 the gospel: his very heart, as it were, goes out af-  
 ter sinners, in the call and offer thereof. It is not  
 possible to conceive any thing more affectionate, than  
 the word in which he bespeaks sinners: Ezek. xxxiii.

11. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no plea-



' sure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked  
 ' turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from  
 ' your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of  
 ' Israel?' Hof. xi. 8. ' How shall I give thee up, E-  
 ' phraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how  
 ' shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee  
 ' as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my  
 ' repentings are kindled together.' Is. lv. 1. 2. 3.  
 ' Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,  
 ' and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat,  
 ' yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and  
 ' without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for  
 ' that which is not bread? and your labour for that  
 ' which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me,  
 ' and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul  
 ' delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come  
 ' unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will  
 ' make an everlasting covenant with you, even the  
 ' sure mercies of David.' Now, I say, as God offers  
 Christ most affectionately and cordially, in like man-  
 ner does faith embrace him. He embraces a whole  
 Christ, with the whole heart and soul; the love, joy,  
 delight, and complacency of the soul, runs out upon  
 him, as their very centre of rest: and these affec-  
 tions, like so many springs of gospel-obedience, set  
 all the members of the body a work in his service;  
 so that the head will study for him, the hand work for  
 him, the feet run his errands, and the tongue ready  
 to plead his cause.

4. Christ is offered particularly, to every man.  
 There is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name,  
 I offer Christ unto him, as if called by name and fir-  
 name. Now, as the offer is particular to every in-  
 dividual

dividual person, so faith embraces Christ with particular application to the soul itself. When I embrace a Saviour, I do not embrace for salvation to another man; no, but I embrace him as my Saviour, for salvation to my own soul in particular. Beware, my friends, of a general doubtful faith, abjured in our national covenant, as a branch of Popery. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness to save all that come to him, will not do the business; no, devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it. There must therefore of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular application thereof unto a man's own soul; for if the mercy of God in Christ be offered to every man in particular, then surely faith, which, as I was saying, is but the echo of the soul to the gospel-call, must embrace Christ, and the mercy of God in him, with particular application to itself, otherwise it doth not answer God's offer, consequently cannot be of a saving nature. So much for the *first* general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, to take notice of some of these songs, which readily the soul has in its mouth, when, like Simeon, it gets Christ embraced in the arms of faith. We are said to be 'filled with all joy and peace in believing;' yea, by faith in an unseen Christ, the soul is replenished 'with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' And when this is the soul's case, it cannot but bless God, as Simeon did, and vent its heart in these or the like songs of praise.

1. It cannot but bless him for electing and everlasting love. Faith's embraces of Christ helps the soul to trace the streams of divine love to their fountain-head, and to read its own name in the book of life, among the living in Jerusalem. O blessed be God, will the soul say, that ever I, wretched I, miserable I, should have been upon God's heart, before the foundations of the world were laid: Glory to God in the highest, who hath drawn me with loving-kindness; whereby I know, that he hath loved me with an everlasting love.

2. The soul, in such a case, cannot but bless God for Christ, and redeeming love through him, saying with the apostle, 'Thanks be unto him for his unspeakable gift.' Glory to him in the highest, that 'unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,' whose name is 'Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.' And then when the soul views the glorious retinue of blessings that come along with Christ, it cannot shun to join issue with the apostle in his triumphant doxology, Eph. i. 2. saying, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' And there are these few, among innumerable blessings, that come along with Christ, which the soul will readily bless God for, in the case mentioned.

1<sup>st</sup>. O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ he is become 'my God,' even 'my own God.' I was once 'without God in the world;' but O what a happy turn is this! Now I can view him in Christ, and say, 'He is my God, my Father, and the rock  
'of



of my salvation ; the portion of my cup : ' and therefore ' the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; ' yea, I have a goodly heritage. '

2dly, O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ the fiery tribunal is turned into a mercy-seat, by his obedience and death. The law and justice having got a complete satisfaction, a way is made for the empire of sovereign grace : so that now ' grace ' reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by ' Jesus Christ our Lord, ' Rom. v. 21. And as it is the will of God that grace should reign, so it is the desire of my soul, to make this name of his to be remembered to all generations. O let grace wear the crown, and sway the sceptre for ever ; and let all the Hallelujahs of the higher house be ' to the praise of ' the glory of his grace. '

3dly, O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ he has ' blotted out all mine iniquities, as a ' cloud, and as a thick cloud. ' There was a cloud of sin pregnant with wrath hovering above my head ; but in Christ I see it scattered : ' We have redemption through his blood, ' even ' the forgiveness of ' sins. ' And therefore, ' Bless the Lord, O my soul : ' and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who ' forgiveth all thine iniquities. '

4thly, O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in Christ I am blessed with an everlasting and law-biding righteousness. Christ, my ever-blessed surety, he was ' made under the law, ' and has ' magnified ' it, and made it honourable ; ' and ' The Lord is ' well pleased for his righteousness sake ; ' and in him, and through him, ' the righteousness of the law is ' fulfilled in me : ' and therefore, ' I will greatly re-

‘joyce in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my  
 ‘God; for he hath clothed me with the garments  
 ‘of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of  
 ‘righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with  
 ‘ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with  
 ‘her jewels,’ If. lxi. 10.

5thly, O blessed be God, will the soul say, that in  
 Christ he is become ‘a father of the fatherless,’ and  
 blessed me with the blessing of adoption and sonship.  
 I may seal it, from my experience, that ‘in him  
 ‘the fatherless findeth mercy.’ I was like an out-  
 cast infant, and helpless orphan, but the everlasting  
 Father took me up, and ‘gave me a place and a  
 ‘name in his house, and within his walls, better  
 ‘than of sons and of daughters, even an everlasting  
 ‘name that shall not be cut off. Behold, what man-  
 ‘ner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, that  
 ‘I should be called a son of God,’ 1 John iii. 1.

6thly, O glory to God, will the soul say, for the  
 open door of ‘access into the holiest by the blood  
 ‘of Jesus.’ The door was once barred against me,  
 and all Adam’s posterity, by the breach of the first  
 covenant; but in Christ it is again opened, so that  
 we may ‘come boldly unto the throne of grace, that  
 ‘we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in  
 ‘time of need.’ An incarnate Deity is now become  
 the way to God and glory.

I might tell you of many other blessings that the  
 soul is ready to bless God for, when it gets Christ in  
 the arms of faith; but I do not insist. I conclude  
 this head, by referring you to two or three scriptural  
 songs, which will readily occur in such a case. The  
 first you have, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. ‘Blessed be the God  
 ‘and

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' &c. Another you have, Rom. viii. 33. to the end of the chapter, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?' &c. A third you have, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' &c. Another, with which I conclude this head, is that which concludes the Bible, Rev. xxii. 20. 'Even so, come Lord Jesus.'

III. The *third* thing proposed was, *to inquire whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ doth thus fill the mouth with praise?*

*Ans.* 1. This flows from the certainty that is in faith. Faith is not a doubting grace; no, doubts and jealousies vanish before it, as the clouds, and darkness of the night, do vanish at the appearance of the sun. And the certainty of faith flows from the stability of these foundations upon which it builds, which are more firm than the pillars of heaven, and foundations of the earth. It builds upon the word of God, the oath of God, the blood of God, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the veracity of God: and seeing it builds upon such immovable foundations, how can it miss to have a certainty in it proportioned, in some measure, unto the grounds upon which it stands? And hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise. Let news be never so good, yet if we have no certainty in our belief of them, it ex-



ceedingly mars our joy and comfort. But now the glad tidings of the gospel, they are no flying uncertain reports; no, it is God that cannot lie who speaks: and thence comes the certainty of faith.

2. This flows from the applying and appropriating nature of faith; which I hinted at already. Let news be never so true, though never so great and good, yet if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he hath no access thereto, or interest therein? But tell him, that all these treasures are his, and that he has the owner's warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a rich feast or banquet, what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it? Tell a naked man, exposed to the injuries of wind and weather, of fine robes and excellent garments, what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use? But tell the hungry man, that the feast is for him; and the naked man, that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So here, the gospel report doth not tell us of a Saviour and salvation that we have no interest in; no, but it tells us, that 'to us is' the word of salvation sent; that 'unto us is' this child born, unto us is' this son given; that he is 'made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' and that, as the great Trustee of heaven, he 'received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also.' Now, faith accordingly it applies all these good news, this Saviour, and his whole salvation, to itself in particular. And  
hence

hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise.

3. This flows from that sensible assurance of God's love, and of grace and salvation, which commonly follows upon believing; according to what you have, Eph. i. 13. 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.' There is a certainty of sense, which very frequently accompanies or follows upon the certainty of faith, as a natural fruit of it; and yet is not of the nature and essence of it, because there may be true faith where there is not this sensible or reflex assurance of grace and salvation. The certainty of faith is built upon the word of God, the record of God, and promise of God, which is a believing, because God hath spoken: Psal. lx. 6, 7. compared, God had made a promise of the kingdom to David, 'God hath spoken in his holiness,' saith he, 'I will rejoice;' and in the faith of this word of promise, he speaks with such certainty, as if he were already in possession, 'Gilead is mine, and Manassah is mine,' &c. But now, the certainty of sense is a knowing that we have believed, or the soul's reflecting upon its own act of believing. The certainty of faith is like the certainty that a man hath of his money in a good and sufficient bond, or the certainty that a man hath of his estate; by a good and sufficient charter; he rests upon his bonds and charters as good securities to him. But the certainty of sense is like the certainty that a man hath of his money, when he is handling it with his fingers, or taking in his rents. By the certainty of faith, Abraham believed, without staggering, because he had God's word of promise for it; but, by the certainty of sense, he

knew it, when he saw Sarah delivered of his son Isaac, and got him in his arms. Now, I say, faith commonly produces this sensible assurance, sweet and reviving experiences of the Lord's love to our souls : and hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise.

IV. The *fourth* thing was, the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*. This doctrine informs us,

1. Of the excellency of the grace of faith. It cannot but be an excellent grace, because it embraces precious Christ. Hence it is, that God puts such an estimate upon it, that he cares for nothing we do, if that be wanting : ' Without faith it is impossible to please God : Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.' Suppose it were possible for a man to attain such a pitch of morality, as to be touching the law blameless ; yet all his obedience, moral and religious, stands for a cypher in God's reckoning ; yea, is like the ' cutting off a dog's neck,' and the ' offering of swines blood' upon God's altar, if faith be wanting. Thus then, I say, faith is an excellent grace, of absolute necessity in order to our acceptance before God. Only let it be here carefully remembered, that it is not the act of faith, but its glorious and ever-blessed object, Jesus Christ, whom it embraces, that renders us acceptable unto God. In point of acceptance, faith renounces its own actings, and looks for ' acceptance only in the beloved ;' it ' rejoiceth in Christ Jesus only, and hath no confidence in the flesh.'

2. See from this doctrine, what a happy and privileged person the believer is. He gets Christ the  
Lamb



Lamb of God in the embraces of his soul; and O what can the most enlarged heart or soul of man wish for more! This was the 'one thing' that David 'desired,' Psal xxvii 4. We read of one in the gospel that said to Christ, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;' to which Christ answered, 'Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it,' Luke xi. 27, 28. And who are they that hear the word of God, and keep it, but believers, who have him formed in their hearts, and clasped in the arms of faith? for 'he that' thus 'hath the Son, hath life.' And concerning such I may say, as Moses said concerning Israel, Deut. xxxiii. 29. 'Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!' Notice the expression, they are a people already saved, they 'have everlasting life.' That day that Christ comes into the heart, the salvation of God comes, as it is said to Zaccheus, 'This day is salvation come to thy house'

3. See from this doctrine the true way of joy and comfort. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, 'Oh that I were as in months past.' Once in a day I thought I could say, 'The candle of the Lord shined upon my head;' but, alas! now the scene is altered, 'the Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me:' how shall I recover my wonted joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it, go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith: take Christ a-new in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel; and, with Simeon, ye shall be made to 'bless God.' It is the wreck of the comfort of the

generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their graces, their frames, their experiences, their attainments, without going forth, by faith, unto the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea: while they sail among the shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks, or running upon sands, because they want deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands: so while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb, while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being 'strong,' not in the created grace that is in itself, but 'in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead.' So then, I say, if ye would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Lord, study to live by faith upon the Son of God; for we are 'filled with joy and peace in believing.'

4. From this doctrine we may gather what a light-some place heaven will be, where the soul shall live in Christ's embraces for ever. If the believer's heart be so refreshed, when he gets Christ embraced by faith, what overpowering floods of joy must flow upon his soul, when he comes to immediate fruition, where no clouds shall ever intercept the rays of the Sun

Sun of righteousness from him, through an endless eternity! No wonder, though sometimes the believer break forth into such longing expressions, when he thinks of immediate enjoyment, as that of Paul, 'I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.'

Use 2d, may be of *trial*. Sirs, you have been in the temple this day; I would ask, Have you seen the Lord's Messiah there? Have you got him, like Simeon, in the arms and embraces of faith? O! say ye, how shall I know if I ever had him in my arms? For answer, take these following things as marks.

1. If ever ye have embraced Christ, Christ has embraced you first; for there is a mutual embracing betwixt Christ and the believer, and it begins on Christ's side; he first gripes the soul by his Spirit, before the soul gripes him by faith: Phil. iii. 12. 'I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' O! will the soul say, I was wandering like a lost sheep, among the mountains of vanity, I had gone into a far country, with the prodigal, and never had a thought of Christ, till he, by his sovereign grace, griped and drew me with the cords of victorious love and grace, and then my heart griped and apprehended him. Never a soul yet came really to believe in Christ, but will be ready to own, that it was not free will, but free grace that began the work: 'No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.'

2. If ever ye had Christ really in the embraces of faith, ye have been made to quit the embraces of other lovers: 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?' Particularly, ye have been made



made to part with the law as a husband: Rom. viii. 4.  
'Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;  
'that ye should be married to' a better husband,  
'even to him who is raised from the dead.' O Sirs!  
it is a harder business than many are aware of, to make  
a divorce between a sinner and the law, so as to make  
him renounce all hopes of salvation and righteousness  
from that airt. It is much easier to pull his lusts out  
of his arms, than to pull the law, as a husband, out  
of his embraces. And the reason of this is plain, be-  
cause the law gives a promise of life to them that obey  
it, 'He that doth those things, shall live in them;'  
which sin and lust cannot do, in regard they carry the  
stamp of hell and wrath visibly upon them, to the eye  
of a natural conscience. So that it is much easier to  
convince a man that his sin is an evil thing, than to  
convince him that his righteousness is so: hence Christ  
tells the Pharisees, these self righteous wretches, 'that  
'publicans and harlots' should 'enter into the kingdom  
'of God before them.' Publicans and harlots, and  
such sort of persons, lie more open unto the sharp ar-  
rows of conviction, than self-righteous persons, who  
make, as it were, a barricado of the law itself, and  
their obedience to it, behind which they lie intrenched  
and fortified, against all the curses and threatenings  
of the law that are denounced against them; they still  
take the law for a friend, while they obey it as well as  
they can, never dreaming that nothing will satisfy the  
law, but an obedience that is every way complete. But  
now, I say, if ever ye have embraced Christ, ye have  
been made to part with the law as a covenant, and  
with your own righteousness by the law, as filthy  
rags, saying with Paul, 'I through the law am dead  
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‘to the law.’ At the same time that the soul quits the embraces of the law as a husband, it parts with other lovers also. The first view of Christ by faith, makes all the twinkling stars of created enjoyments to vanish and disappear; so that the soul joins issue with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.’

3. If ever Christ was in the embraces of thy soul, thou mayst know it by the desirable concomitants and effects thereof. I shall not stand upon them; only, in so many words. Your estimate of Christ will be raised; for ‘unto you which believe he is precious.’ Your love to him will be inflamed; for ‘faith worketh by love.’ Your joy and peace will be increased; for ‘believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.’ Heart-holiness will be promoted; for ‘faith purifieth the heart.’ And, in a word, your souls will make their boast in him; for ‘in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.’

Use 3<sup>d</sup>, shall be of *exhortation* to all in general. Sirs, before we part this evening, I would fain have every soul hearing me, going home with the great Messiah, the Son of God in the arms and embraces of their souls; and then I am sure ye should go away, blessing God that ever ye came here. We must deal with you as reasonable creatures, and persuade you in a moral way: and when we are so doing, look up to God for the concurring efficacy of his holy Spirit, whose prerogative it is to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel. And therefore, by way of motive, consider,

1. The absolute need ye have of this Christ, whom

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we offer unto you. Without him ye are *condemned already*; without him ye are *without God in the world*; *God is angry with you every day*; the law and justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is pursuing you. And therefore, O sinners, flee to a Saviour, 'Turn ye to your strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope.'

2. Consider the matchless excellency of that Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Angels and men are at an everlasting stand to speak of his worth and glory; he is best known by his own and his Father's testimony concerning him: and if ye would know the record of God concerning him, search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of him; it is in this glass that 'we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' I despair, that ever a sinner will embrace Christ, till there be an uptaking of his personal excellency, as Immanuel God-man. There is a seeing of the Son, which, in order of nature, although not in order of time, goes before the soul's believing in him. John vi. 40.

3. Consider the ability and sufficiency of this Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Take the Father's testimony of his ability, Psal lxxxix. 20. 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' Take his own testimony, Is. lxiii. 1.—'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.' Take the Spirit's testimony in the mouth of the apostle Paul, Heb. vii. 25. declaring him 'able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him.' Thus ye have the three that bear record in heaven, attesting the sufficiency of this Saviour. O then 'set to' your 'seal, that God is true,' by 'believing the record that God gives



‘ gives of his Son ;’ for if ye do not, your unbelief gives the lie unto a whole Trinity, 1 John v. 10. 11.

4. Consider, that this sufficient Saviour is *the sent of God*. This is a designation given to Christ thirty or forty times in the gospel according to John, and the ordinary argument with which Christ persuades sinners to embrace and receive him. And nothing could have greater influence than this designation, if the weight of it were but duly weighed. O consider in what quality and capacity his Father has sent him : shall not God’s Ambassador extraordinary get a hearing among a company of condemned rebels ? He is sent as a Redeemer, to liberate captives ; and shall not captives embrace him ? He is sent as a surety ; and will not dyvours and bankrupts embrace a cautioner ? He is sent as a physician ; and will not the wounded and diseased sinner embrace him, and his healing balm ?  
&c.

5. Consider, that his heart and his arms are open and ready to embrace all that are willing to be embraced by him. O, may the soul say, fain would I embrace him, but I doubt of his willingness to embrace me. I tell you good news, he is more willing to embrace you by far, than you are to be embraced by him. He says he is willing, and you may believe his word, for he is ‘ the Amen, the faithful and true witness ;’ and he says, that he will cast out none that come unto him : he swears he is willing, and will ye not believe his oath ? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. ‘ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.’ Pray tell me, why did he engage from eternity, and voluntarily give his hand  
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to the Father, in the council of peace, saying, 'Lo, I come;—I delight to do thy will, O my God?' Why did he assume the nature of man, and the sinless infirmities thereof? Why did he that is the great Law-giver, subject himself unto his own law? Why did he that is the Lord of life and glory, submit to the stroke of death ignominiously upon a cross? Why doth he send out his ministers to you, with call upon call? Why doth he wait all the day long, saying, *Behold me, behold me?* Why doth he expostulate the matter with you? Why is he grieved at the obstinacy of your hearts, if he be not willing that ye should embrace him? For the Lord's sake therefore consider these things, and do not reject the counsel of God against yourselves.

6. Consider what a glorious train and retinue of blessings come along with him, when he is embraced in the arms of faith; such as, pardon of sin, Heb. viii. 12.; peace with God, Rom. v. 1.; a complete justifying righteousness, Rom. viii. 3. 4.; adoption and sonship, John i. 12.; sanctification, both in the root and fruit of it, 1 Cor. i. 30.; saving knowledge of God, and the mysteries of his covenant, 2 Cor. iv. 6.; the crown of eternal glory at last, John iii. 16. All these might be particularly enlarged on; but I do not insist, but proceed to obviate some objections that some may make against complying with this exhortation.

*Object. 1.* Some poor soul may be ready to say, Gladly would I embrace Christ, with my very soul; but still I entertain a jealousy of my right and warrant to meddle with the unspeakable gift of God; he is such a great good, that I am afraid it be but presumption

tion in me to attempt the embracing of him. Now, for removing any jealousies of this nature, I shall lay before you a few of these warrants, upon which a lost sinner may receive and embrace this Saviour.

1. Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant. Ye must either do or die; there is no middle: 'He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.' Do not stand to dispute the matter; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, wherein a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel, Shall I believe, or shall I not? Or if ye will dispute the matter, will ye argue, as the Samaritan lepers did: 'If we sit still here, we perish; but if we go into the camp of the Assyrians, peradventure we shall live.' So ye, if we sit still in this sinful and miserable condition, without God, and without Christ in the world, we unavoidably perish: but if we throw ourselves into the arms of a Redeemer, and upon the mercy of God in him, beyond peradventure we shall be saved. And therefore, I say, let absolute necessity be your warrant.

2. Venture to embrace this Saviour in the arms of faith, upon the warrant of the very design of his incarnation. Why is there a Saviour provided? Why was he manifested in the flesh? Upon what errand was he sent into the world, but 'to seek and save that which was lost?' Well, since this is the very design of God in giving a Saviour, that sinners might be saved by him; what can be more agreeable unto him, or his Father that sent him, than that a lost sinner should embrace and receive him?

3. Let the revelation of this incarnate Deity, in the



the glorious gospel, be your warrant to embrace and receive him; a bare revelation of a Saviour, without any more, is enough to induce a sinner to believe in him. Why was the brazen serpent in the wilderness lifted up on the pole, but that every one in the camp of Israel, who were stung with the fiery serpents, might look unto it, and be healed? The very lifting up of the brazen serpent was a sufficient warrant to any man to look to it: so the Son of man, his being lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, warrants every man to believe in him, John iii. 14, 15.

4. Besides the revelation of Christ, ye have a full, free, and unhampered offer of him in the external call of the gospel; and this directed to every one, without exception, Is. lv. 1. 2. 3. Rev. xxii. 17. Mark xvi. 15. Prov. viii. 4. Sirs, we offer a Christ to you, and the whole fulness of grace and glory, merit and Spirit, that is in him; as the free gift of God, without the money and price of your own works and qualifications; if ye bring any such price, to make a purchase of the pearl of great price, ye shall lose him for ever: God loves to give his Christ freely, but he scorns to receive any thing for him. Let this then be your warrant, that Christ is gifted and offered of God in this gospel: and let it be remembered, that in the matter of a gift, there is no difference between man and man; the poorest, as well as the richest, may receive a gift presented unto him: a condemned malefactor has as good a right to receive a gift presented unto him by the king, as the greatest favourite in the court; his being a guilty criminal is no prejudice at all to his receiving a gift; yea, his being so qualifies him for receiving the pardon. So here, Christ's being  
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the gift of God, freely offered and presented, warrants the sinner to receive him, without respect to any qualifications but that of his being a sinner. Hunger is the best disposing qualification for meat, nakedness fits a man for clothing, &c. And that Christ seeks no other qualifications, is evident from his counsel to Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. 18.—‘Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.’

5. Ye have not only an offer of Christ, but an express command requiring you to embrace him, for your warrant: 1 John iii. 23. ‘This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.’ Sirs, it is not a thing left optional to you, to embrace Christ or not, as ye please; no, ye are concluded under a law, fenced with the severest penalty, ‘He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.’ The unbelieving sinner counteracts the authority of Heaven; and thus rushes upon ‘God’s neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers.’ Ye have no reason to doubt but that the command of believing is to you; for if ye were not commanded to believe, your unbelief could not be your sin: ‘Where no law is, there is no transgression.’ Ye do not doubt but ye are commanded, by the word of God, to read, hear, pray, sanctify the Sabbath, and to perform the other duties of the moral law; and because they are commanded, ye mint at obedience. Now, believing is

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as peremptorily enjoined, yea, rather more than any other duty, inasmuch as the successful and acceptable performance of all other duties depends upon it. And therefore do not stand disputing your warrant, against the express authority of Heaven.

6. Besides the command of God, ye have a promise of welcome to encourage you in believing: John vi. 37. 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' John iii. 16. 'Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' But, say ye, these promises may be to others, and not to me. I answer, The promise is indorsed to you, directed to you, in the external call and dispensation of the gospel, Acts ii. 39. There the apostle is preaching to a company of men, whose hands had lately been dipped in the blood of the Son of God. He calls them to faith and repentance. By what argument does he enforce the exhortation? Why, he tells them, 'The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' Where, it is plain, the promise is extended, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, who at that time were afar off; and then, indefinitely, both to Jew and Gentile, to whom the call of the gospel should reach; the external call, which is only here intended, howsoever the Spirit of the Lord did internally concur, being the alone foundation upon which the promise is to be received, and not the internal call of one person, which can never be a warrant of believing to another. And therefore, as the apostle said to them, so say I to you, in the name of God, 'The promise is unto you,' I mean, the promise of welcome: 'Whosoever of you believeth, shall not



‘not perish.’ This promise is not made to believers exclusively of others, but to every one that hears this gospel; for if so, we could call none to believe but such as have believed, which is most absurd. Well then, let God’s promise warrant you to believe in Christ: and if ye do not think this sufficient, take his promise of welcome, ratified with his oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. these being the ‘two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie.’

7. Let the indefinite and absolute nature of the covenant of grace be your warrant for embracing the Lord Jesus. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond, or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name, by the hand of faith. The strain and tenor of it is, ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: I will sprinkle clean water upon them: I will put my spirit within them: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will subdue their iniquities.’ Where, you see, the grant runs in an indefinite way; no man’s name mentioned, neither any by name excluded. Why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to *take hold of God’s covenant*? O Sirs! the covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith), is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men; he that throws it in, cries to every

every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe to shore : so God, in the gospel-dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a ground of faith, assuring them, that whosoever takes hold of his covenant, and receives his Christ, whom he hath 'given for a covenant of the people, shall not 'perish, but have everlasting life.' For the Lord's sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that ye know not if it be designed for you. Would you not reckon it ridiculous madness in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall a disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom ? Would not every one of them gripe at it, with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question ? Now, this is the very case, O sinner ; thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery ; God, by his ministers, cries to you to take hold of this rope of salvation : O then ! 'see that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven ;' do not dispute yourselves away from your own mercy.

8. Let the welcome that others have met with in coming to Christ be your encouragement to venture also. Never any that really came to him but they met with a kindly reception. Ask the prodigal son, ask Mary Magdalene, Paul, and others, what entertainment they met with from this Saviour ; they will be ready to tell you, that they *obtained mercy*. Now, the same mercy that saved them, is as ready to save you. You do not doubt but Moses, David, Peter, Paul, and other saints that are now in glory, had sufficient warrant to believe. Sirs, you have the same grounds of faith as ever they had ; the same God, the same

same Saviour, the same Bible, the same covenant, the same promises, the same faithfulness of God to lean to, as ever they had; and these grounds of faith are so firm, that they never disappointed any that leaned to them: and therefore be encouraged to believe, as they did. O how will it gall and torment unbelieving sinners in hell for ever, when they see others, who believed upon the same grounds that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils, and damned spirits, because of their unbelief! And how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had!

*Object.* 2. You bid me embrace Christ: but, alas! he is far away out of my reach: Christ is in heaven, how shall I win at him?

*Ans.* Seeing ye cannot come up to Christ, Christ is come down to you; and we bring him near to you, in this word of salvation which we preach: If. xlv. 12, 13. 'Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry.' And therefore, 'say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead):' for 'the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach,' Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. Sirs, Christ is in this gospel, this word of faith and grace, which we, in the name of God, deliver unto



you : and your faith must terminate immediately upon this word, otherwise ye can never embrace him. As I believe or trust a man by his verbal or written promise ; so I embrace Christ by the word of faith, or promises in the gospel. Suppose a sponfible man residing in America, should send me his bill for any sum of money, that man and his money are brought near to me by his bill and security which he sends me : so here, though Christ be in heaven, and we upon earth, yet the word of faith, which we preach, brings him, his kingdom, righteousness, salvation, and whole fullness, nigh unto every one of us, so that we need not ' ascend into heaven, or descend into hell,' in quest of him.

*Object.* 3. My arms have been so defiled with the embraces of other lovers, that I am afraid Christ will never allow me to embrace him. For answer, I only refer you to Jer. iii. 1. ' Thou hast played the harlot ' with many lovers ; yet return again to me, saith the ' Lord.' But, say ye, my sins are highly aggravated.

*Ans.* Is. i. 18. ' Come now, and let us reason together, ' saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they ' shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like ' crimson, they shall be as wool.'

*Object.* 4. You bid me embrace him ; but, alas ! I want an arm ; I have no power to embrace him. *Ans.* If thou hast a will to embrace him, the greatest difficulty is over, for there lies the principal stop : ' Ye ' will not come to me, that ye might have life.' Where God gives *to will*, he gives also *to do of his own good pleasure*. You say, you want the arm to embrace him ; then do as the man with the withered hand did, mint *to stretch it forth*, in obedience to the command of Christ]

Christ.. Believing is a thing we must be essaying, even before we can find the Spirit of God working it in us effectually. We cannot pray, we cannot sanctify the Sabbath, we cannot think a good thought, till the Spirit of God work it in us; and yet we do not forbear these duties because we have no power to do them: so although we have no power to believe, yet we should be trying to believe. The way that the Spirit of God works faith in the souls of the elect, is by making them sensible of their own inability, that they may turn the work over upon his own hand, who 'worketh all our works in us, and for us.'

*Object.* 5. Let me mint at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's elect; for it is only they that are *ordained to eternal life*, that *do believe*. *Ans.* This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, whereby he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus; and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason, that you do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Do not ye say, Meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. Ye do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth: or I will not go home to my house, because I do not know if ever God has decreed I should come the length. Ye would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue at this rate, in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of Heaven lie quite out of the road

in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children.' And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because ye were not elected, but because ye would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off, 'because of their unbelief,' Rom. xi. 7. & 20. I shall only add, that as ye cannot know that the meat set before you is yours in possession, till ye take it; so neither can ye ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till ye take him into your possession by faith. And therefore ye must believe in Christ, before ye know your election; otherwise ye shall never know it, and shall never believe either. So much by way of exhortation.

I shall conclude this discourse with a short word to two sorts of persons.

*First*, To you who, like Simeon, have got him in the embraces of your souls, and who perhaps can say, to your sweet experience, with the spouse, 'I have found him whom my soul loveth.' All I say to you shall be comprised in these two or three words.

1. O bless God, as Simeon did, for such a privilege; 'let the high praises of God be in your mouths.' I told you already of several songs ye have ground and reason to sing, which I shall not stand to resume. Only, to engage you to bless him, consider, that this is all the tribute he expects from you. Who will ever bless him, if not the people that he has formed for himself? Consider again, that this is the way to have blessings multiplied upon you; the thankful beggar



gar is best served at the door both of God and man. The trumpeter loves to sound where there is an echo, which brings back the sound to his ears; so God loves to bestow his blessings, where he hears of them again in songs of praise and gratitude. Praise is the work of heaven, through a long eternity: now, they who are bound to that land afar off, should be lisping out the language of the land before they come there.

2. Have ye got Christ in the arms of your souls? O then improve your golden season: and while ye are allowed to ride with the King, in the chariot of the wood of Lebanon, improve your interest with him, both for yourselves and others; particularly intreat him, that he would revive his own work, which is under such a sad decay in our land at this day; study to 'bring him into your mother's house, and into the 'chamber of her that conceived you.'

3. Have ye got him in your arms? Then follow the spouse's practice, Cant. iii. 4. 'I held him, and 'would not let him go.' O keep him in the embraces of your souls; his presence dispels clouds, and turns the shadows of death into the morning; it is like oil to the chariot-wheels of the soul: light, life, liberty, peace, pardon, and plenty, are his continual attendants. And remember that his departure is of a very dangerous consequence. It is true, his real presence shall never depart; but yet his quickening, strengthening, and upholding presence may be withdrawn to such a degree, that ye may go mourning without the sun: and if through untenderness ye provoke him to withdraw, the quarrel may be pursued even to the gates of hell; so that ye may be made to cry out, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me,

‘ the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me,’ Job vi. 4.

And in order to your keeping him in the embraces of your souls,

1<sup>st</sup>, Beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw; particularly beware of security, which made him to withdraw from the spouse, Cant. v. 3. & 6. compared. Beware of pride; for *God resisteth the proud, and beholds them afar off*. Beware of worldly-mindedness: ‘ For the iniquity of his covetousness ’ was I wroth, and smote him,’ Is. lvii. 17. Beware of unbelief, that root of bitterness, which causes to depart from the living God. Distrust and *jealousy is the rage of a man*; much more is it provoking unto God. Under the law God appointed porters to keep watch at the door of the temple, that nothing might be suffered to enter, which might defile the dwelling-place of his name: thy soul and body, believer, is the temple of God; therefore guard against every thing that may defile the same.

2<sup>dly</sup>, If ye would hold Christ in the embraces of your souls, keep grace in a lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send out a fragrant smell for his entertainment. Keep the arm of faith continually about him; let the fire of divine love burn continually upon the altar of thy heart; let the anchor of hope be fixed within the vail; let the fountain of evangelical repentance be still running; and under your greatest attainments be humble, and take care to set the crown upon Christ’s head, saying, *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory*.

The second sort of persons I would speak a little to,  
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are these who perhaps are complaining of hidings and withdrawings, and are perhaps saying, I came to the temple to see if I could get Christ in my arms, but I am disappointed; yea, matters are come that length with me, that I am ready to raze foundations, and to conclude that I am an utter stranger to him. All I have to offer to you shall be comprised in these two or three things, with which I conclude.

1. Allow me to ask, If there be not a void and emptiness in thy heart which the whole creation cannot fill, till Christ himself come and fill it? Are not ordinances, ministers, word, and sacrament, empty without him, like dry breasts? That says, thou art not altogether a stranger to him. And therefore do not entertain harsh thoughts of thyself; thy case is not at all unprecedented. What think ye of David, Psal. xiii. of Asaph, Psal. lxxvii. of Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. yea, of Christ himself, who, through the withdrawing of his Father's love, was made to utter that heart-rending cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

2. Know for thy comfort, that thy hiding Lord will return again: 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,' Psal. xxx. 4. 5. Is. liv. 7. 8. The very breathings and longings of thy soul after him are a pledge of his return; for 'he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.'

3. When ye cannot get Christ himself embraced, study to embrace his word of promise, as the Old Testament saints did, Heb. xi. 13. As a loving wife will lay the letters of her absent husband in her breast, and perhaps kiss his hand-writ; so lay the sweet pro-



mises of thy best Husband in thy bosom, and between thy breasts, until he himself return.

4. *Lastly*, Maintain your claim unto him on the ground of the covenant, when ye cannot maintain it upon a ground of sense; as a wife will maintain her relation to her husband, though he be both angry and absent. The Lord loves to have his people threaping kindness, and maintaining their claim upon the marriage-contract of the new covenant, when they 'walk 'in darkness, and see no light,' *Is. l. 10.*: and such a carriage as this commonly lands in a happy meeting betwixt Christ and the souls of his people; for after believing comes sealing.



## A Discourse on the Throne of Grace.

PSAL. lxxxix. 14.

*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*

**T**HIS psalm elegantly describes God's covenant of grace made with Christ, and his spiritual seed in him, under the type of God's covenant of royalty with David and his posterity; as is plain from many passages of the psalm, which are too sublime and lofty to be restrained unto David's temporary reign, or that of his posterity, over the tribes of Israel, which quite expired in the revolution of a few ages.

The words read are a description of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom and administration: 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.'

Where we may notice, 1. The royal person who is the subject-matter of my text, and of the greatest part of the psalm; he is pointed at in the pronoun *thy*. This is none other than Christ, the true David, who was to reign in the latter days; and in whom David's family and kingdom shall be perpetual for ever. This is the King who rules in righteousness, and whose seed is to be established for ever, whose throne shall be built up unto all generations, vers. 4.

2. We have a badge of royal Majesty and sovereignty ascribed unto him; a *throne*. We frequently read in scripture of Christ's throne, Psal. xlv. 6. compared with Heb. i. 8. 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever

‘and ever.’ God’s throne is threefold. (1.) His throne of glory; by which I understand the essential glory and majesty of the divine nature. This throne is inaccessible by finite creatures; hence 1 Tim. vi. 16. he is said to ‘dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.’ The light of glory that breaks forth from this throne of essential glory, is too bright and overwhelming either for men or angels immediately to behold. Hence the Seraphims, Is. vi. are represented as covering their faces with their wings, to veil their eyes from that dazzling glory of divine holiness shining forth from his glorious throne, which is high and lifted up. O *who* of Adam’s fallen posterity *shall stand in his holy place!* (2.) There is his throne of justice, where he judges sinners according to the tenor of the law or broken covenant of works. At this bar every unbeliever is *condemned already*; and from this throne their final and irreverfible doom will pafs at the laft day, *Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.* Before this throne no flesh living can be juftified: ‘If thou, Lord, fhouldft mark iniquities: O Lord, who fhall ftand?’ Pfal. cxxx. 3. (3.) We read of a throne of grace, Heb. iv. 16. ‘Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.’ And this is the throne intended in my text, as is plain from the clofe of the verfe, and what follows, *Mercy and truth go before the face of him that fits on it; a joyful found of peace, pardon, and falvation; iffues forth from it to perifhing finners. They walk in the light of the King’s countenance, rejoice in his name, and are exalted in his righteoufnefs, &c.* Terror and amazement,  
death



death and ruin, are the fruits of God's appearing to sinners from a throne of glory, or justice: and therefore, I say, it must be a throne of grace that is here intended.

3. In the words we have the firm foundation upon which this throne of grace doth stand; its *habitation*, or (as in the margin) *establishment*, is *justice and judgment*: the firmest foundation upon which any throne can be settled. The thrones of many earthly potentates are reared and built up with violence and oppression; but the throne of God's kingdom of grace is established in righteousness. The Son of God, as the surety of sinners, submitted to satisfy *justice*, and to undergo the *judgment* and condemnation of the broken law, whereby he brings in everlasting righteousness; and upon this bottom or foundation the throne of grace is established, and upon this *basis* (as Pool reads it) will it stand for ever.

The doctrine I design to prosecute from the words is this.

DOCT. *That God's administration of grace is founded upon the complete satisfaction of justice by his eternal Son as our surety. Or take it thus, That justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ as our surety, is the basis and foundation of a throne of grace. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. I only name two other places of holy writ for confirmation of the doctrine. The one we have, Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. where the apostle tells us, 'We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare*

his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past;—to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Where it is plain, that the grace of God in pardoning and justifying the ungodly sinner, is founded upon the propitiatory sacrifice of the death of Christ; and grace's administration being built upon this ground, God is just in pardoning the sinner that believes in Jesus. Another clear text to the same purpose we have, Rom. v. 21. where grace is said to 'reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.' The government of grace is founded on righteousness, *i. e.* upon the righteousness of Christ, whereby justice was satisfied in the execution of judgment upon the surety.

In handling this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, observe the method following.

I. I shall speak a little of this throne.

II. Of the basis or foundation of the throne.

III. Notice some pillars wherewith the throne is surrounded and supported.

IV. Inquire why God will have justice and judgment for the foundation of his throne of grace.

V. Apply the whole.

I. I say, I would *take a view of the throne*. Where again I shall, 1. Shew what this throne is, and why so called. 2. Inquire what comfortable views of God a guilty sinner may have from this throne. 3. Offer a few scriptural remarks concerning it.

*First*, What is this throne, and why so called? In one

one word then, By this throne of grace we are just to understand God manifesting himself in our own nature, and dealing with sinners through Christ according to the grace of the-gospel. I take that word of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 19. 20. to be a just account of what is intended by a throne of grace, 'To wit, that ' God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;' issuing forth a word of peace and reconciliation, that sinners might no more continue in their enmity, by dreading God as an implacable judge, or inexorable enemy, but might return to him as a reconciled God and Father. The reason of all which is subjoined, vers. 21. ' For he hath made him to be sin for us, ' who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

Now, God's administration of grace toward guilty sinners through Christ, may be called a throne, either,

1. With allusion unto the mercy-seat in the typical temple of Jerusalem. Israel was a theocracy; the holy One of Israel was their King, and the mercy-seat was his throne. It was an eminent type of Christ, and the most solemn and sacred thing in all that typical administration. God is said to ' dwell between ' the cherubims: Shine forth, O thou that dwellest ' between the cherubims: ' so God dwelleth in Christ; yea, ' in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead ' bodily.' And through him God dwelleth with man upon earth in a way of grace: through him we have entrance into the holiest, as Israel entered into the person of their high priest: in him we make atonement for our sins; and through him we receive  
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the oracles of God, the revelations of the divine will: in him God meets and communes with us, as he did from the mercy-seat in the material temple, Exod. xxv. 17. 22. Or,

2. It may be called a throne, because of the glorious greatness and royal majesty of God that shines in this administration of grace through Christ. A throne you know is a seat of majesty peculiar unto sovereigns. Let none imagine, that the glory of God is any thing lessened by his sitting upon a throne of grace, or that less reverence is due to him here, than upon a throne of glory or justice. Indeed the boldness of faith is both allowed and commanded in our approaches unto this throne; but this doth not diminish, but increase the soul's reverence and holy fear: Psal. xcix. 1. 'The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved.' Every thing in and about God's throne of grace appears great. 'For the beauty of his' throne, 'he hath set it in majesty.' For instance take these few particulars.

1<sup>st</sup>, There is royal majesty in the very name of him that sits on the throne. What is his name? O happy they that know it, and by the eye of faith can read it written on his thigh and vesture, 'The King of kings, and Lord of lords,' Rev. xix. 16. His name is 'Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace.'

2<sup>dly</sup>, There is majesty in his looks: 'Honour and majesty are before his face. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars;' yea, 'as the sun shining in his strength.' There is such a majestic sweetness in the looks of his reconciled face, as 'turns the  
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‘the shadow of death into the morning,’ and puts more gladness in the heart, than when corn, wine, and oil doth abound.

3dly, There is majesty in his words and voice: and every one that knows it will be ready to say, as in the words following my text, ‘Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. The voice of the Lord,’ even from a throne of grace, ‘is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.’ This voice is ‘the power of God unto salvation.’ God’s voice in the thunder makes the hinds to calve; but his voice from a throne of grace makes the dead to live, the dumb to sing, the lame man to leap like an hart: and no wonder, for his words they are ‘spirit and life,’ yea, ‘words of eternal life.’ Christ speaks but a word to Mary, calls her by her name, ‘Mary;’ and immediately her heart flutters with joy, and she cries out, ‘Rabboni, My Master.’ Cant. ii. 8. ‘The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,’ &c.

4thly, There is majesty in his vesture. He is ‘clothed with a garment down to the foot;’ a robe of righteousness, a garment of salvation. His whole mystical body, and every the least member is covered with it. When he sits on his throne, ‘his train,’ or, as in the margin, Is. vi. ‘the skirts thereof, filleth the temple. All his garments smell of myrrh, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces, whereby’ the attendants of his throne are ‘made glad.’

5thly, There is majesty in his sceptre. We read of the sceptre of Christ’s kingdom, Psal. xlv. called ‘the rod of his strength,’ Psal. cx. 2.; by which we are to understand the gospel accompanied with the efficacy of his Spirit. There is such a majesty in this sceptre,

sceptre, when he sways it from a throne of grace; that it makes a 'willing people' come in to him in the day of his armies.

6thly, There is majesty in the acts that are passed at a throne of grace; they are suitable to the nature of the throne. Acts of grace only pass at a throne of grace; acts of mercy at a mercy-seat. What an air of infinite majesty does God display from his throne of grace, when, beyond the expectation of men and angels, he issues forth that royal act of grace indemnifying rebels, 'I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!' Is. xliii. 25.

7thly, The majesty of his throne appears from the heralds that are employed to intimate and proclaim the acts of grace that pass thereat. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, and all the ministers of Christ, what are they but so many heralds ordained by the King, who sits upon his throne, to go intimate and proclaim his will of grace unto a lost world? 'Go ye into all the world,' says he 'and preach the gospel to every creature.' *q. d.* Go publish the acts of grace that are passed in favour of lost sinners at a throne of grace.

8thly, There is majesty in the <sup>at</sup>tributes and revenues of this throne. God's administration of grace in Christ brings in a large revenue of glory and praise to the crown of Heaven. Christ's kingdom of grace is wide and large. By his Father's grant 'the Heavens, then, and uttermost parts of the earth,' are given to him for a possession, Psal. ii. 'And in all corners of his extended inheritance there is a tribute of glory and praise levied unto him: Is. xxiv. 10. 'From the  
 ' uttermost



‘ uttermost part, or wing, of the earth have we heard  
 ‘ songs, even glory to the righteous,’ *i. e.* glory to  
 ‘ Jesus Christ the righteous.’ The church-militant  
 will be paying this tribute while the world stands.  
 ‘ Men are blessed in him ;’ and therefore ‘ all nations,’  
 and all generations, ‘ shall call him blessed,’ saying,  
 ‘ Blessed be his glorious name for ever ; and let the  
 ‘ whole earth be filled with his glory,’ Psal. lxxii. 17.  
 19. The church-triumphant in heaven will be paying  
 this tribute of praise to a throne of grace through an  
 endless eternity : Rev. iv. 10. ‘ They cast their crowns  
 ‘ before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O  
 ‘ Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power,’  
 &c. Rev. v. 8, 12.

*9thly*, There is majesty in the gifts and distribu-  
 tions which are made from this throne, and in the  
 manner of his giving them. The gifts are worthy of  
 the giver who sits on the throne. He gives himself,  
 saying, ‘ I will be their God.’ He gives his Son,  
 John iii. 16. He gives his Spirit, Luke xi. 13. He  
 gives grace and glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. In a word,  
 he gives all the sure mercies of David. Whatever  
 comes from a throne of grace, must needs come in a  
 way of gift : otherwise it would not suit the nature of  
 the throne. It is below the majesty of the great King,  
 whose name is gracious, to receive money or price  
 from us. What he gives, he gives freely, without  
 regard to any qualifications in us, Is. lv. 1. Rev. xxii.  
 17.

*Secondly*, I come to inquire what comfortable views  
 of God are to be had by a guilty trembling sinner  
 from this throne of grace. In general, every view  
 of God here is inviting and encouraging. Unbelief

is said to turn us away from the living God, Heb. iii. 12. And the way how it turns us away from him, is either by viewing him as upon a throne of absolute mercy; and so it turns us into a presumptuous confidence of safety, in a way of sin: or else it views him as upon a throne of inexorable justice: and so it turns us into the way of despair, and makes us fly and shun his presence as a destroying enemy. But faith views God as upon a throne of grace; and there it sees every perfection of the divine nature looking toward the sinner with an encouraging smile. More particularly,

1. God upon a throne of grace is to be seen as 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 3. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is the great New-Testament title of God; and oh what amazing grace and sweetness is in it! Christ is 'our Lord, our Jesus, our Christ;' for 'unto us' this 'child is born, 'unto us' this 'son is given:' he is our 'Goel' or 'kinsman,' our elder brother; and he being so near of kin to us, our blood-relation, his relation to God descends to us through him, insomuch that his God is our God, and his Father is our Father. Hence Christ directs Mary, John xx. 17. to go to his 'brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' O what can be more encouraging! He is 'your Father,' because he is 'my Father,' and 'your God,' because he is 'my God.' There is a rich mine of grace here, which angels do desire to pry into. And it is some view of God in this relation to Christ, that first influences the sinner's turn to God. 'I will arise,' says

says the prodigal, 'and go to my father,' Luke xv. 18. 'Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the 'Lord our God,' Jer. iii. 22. And a law condemned sinner can never view him as its God and Father, but only as he is upon a throne of grace, or as he reveals himself in Christ.

2. From a throne of grace God is to be seen as a God of love, yea, as love itself: 1 John iv. 16. 'God 'is love.' vers. 10. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to 'be the propitiation for our sins.' So John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,' &c. This love of God to lost sinners lay hid under a vail of wrath and justice, till the vail was rent by the satisfaction of Christ; and then indeed the love and kindness of God toward man appeared, venting itself in a most glorious and triumphant manner. O how encouraging is this view of God, to come to his throne, with the confidence of faith, for grace and mercy to help! It was this view that made David to cry, Psal. xxxvi. 7. 'How excellent 'is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy 'wings.'

3. From a throne of grace a guilty sinner may view him as a God of peace: Heb. xiii. 20. 'Now the 'God of peace that brought again from the dead our 'Lord Jesus,' &c. God's anger and fury began to burn against Adam, and all his posterity, immediately after the fall; and if a stop had not been put to it, it had consumed the earth with its increase, and burnt into the lowest hell: but no sooner did he receive the atonement, either in the promise or actual payment of



of it, from our blessed surety, but the flaming sword of justice is put up in its scabbard, and a gracious declaration issued forth, that 'fury is not in him.' Indeed if sinners will still deal with him as upon a throne of justice, or according to the terms of the law covenant, they will find him to be 'a consuming fire.' But, oh! who will be so mad as to set briers and thorns in battle against devouring flames? if they do, he will go through them, and consume them together. Shall we not rather turn toward him as upon a throne of grace, where we shall hear him saying to the rebellious sinner, 'Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me?' Is. xxvii. 4. 5.

3 4. From a throne of grace God is to be seen as a God with us: Matth. i. 23. compared with Is. vii. 14. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us.' In Christ he is God with us, to avenge our quarrel upon the serpent, by bruising his head. 'The day of vengeance is in mine heart.' With us, to save from law, justice, the world, and all them that would condemn our souls, Psal. cix. 31. With us, to strengthen, help, and uphold us in all difficulties and dangers, with the right hand of his righteousness. And, oh! 'if God be with us, who can be against us?' Hence is that triumphant song of the church, Psal. xlii. 'The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,' &c.

5. Again, let us view him from a throne of grace, and

and we shall see him to be a promising God. The absolute God is to a sinner a threatening God. Nothing is to be heard from a throne of justice, but curses against every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But, O Sirs, come to a throne of grace, to God in Christ, and you shall see a promising God. 2 Cor. i. 20. we are told, 'all the promises of God are in Christ, and in him yea and amen.' Where-ever we meet with any promise of God in the scriptures of truth, be it a promise of pardon, of peace, of counsel, of grace, or glory for this life, or that which is to come; we would still remember, that they come from a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Christ having fulfilled the proper condition of the promise by his obedience unto death, all the promises are his in the first instance; he is the first heir of them all: and in him, and through him, they are given out to us in the word as the immediate ground and foundation of our faith, with that intimation and advertisement, 'The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as' lie within the compass of the gospel-call, Acts ii. 39. O Sirs, here is good news from a throne of grace, if you can but receive and credit it, with application to your own souls. As all the threatenings of the word are spoken to the sinner in particular from a throne of justice, as if he were spoke to by name and surname; so all the promises of the word are directed to you in particular from a throne of grace, as though you were expressed in them by name. There is not a son of Adam but had as much concern with that promise, Gen. iii. 15. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise  
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‘the serpent’s head,’ as Adam himself had, in whose hearing it was uttered. Thus, I say, God from a throne of grace is to be seen as a promising God.

6. View God upon this throne, and you shall see him to be a God matching with our family. There is a twofold match that the great Jehovah makes with the family of Adam. (1.) He matches with our nature, joining it to himself by a hypostatical union in the person of his eternal Son; and thus, by marrying our nature into a personal union, he becomes sib to the whole family of Adam, Jew and Gentile. And this is ‘good tidings of great joy unto all people,’ that ‘unto us,’ not to fallen angels, ‘is born in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord,’ Luke ii. 10. 11. (2.) God having married our nature, and as it were come upon a level with us, that the inequality of the parties might be no stop, he proclaims his purpose of marriage with our very persons in the dispensation of the gospel. This proposal and proclamation of marriage coming forth from the throne of grace, is made to all without exception in the call of the gospel, Matth. xxii. 4. Yea, all the members of the visible church are in some sense married unto the Son of God, Jer. iii. 14. And if it were not so, they could not be charged with adultery, or playing the harlot with other lovers, as they are, vers. 1. But besides all this, in a day of power he determines the poor soul, whom he hath loved with an everlasting love, to give its hearty assent and consent unto the promise and proposal of marriage made by Christ in the gospel, saying, ‘I am the Lord’s,’ Is. xlv. 5. Thus he fulfils his promise, chap. liv. 5. ‘Thy Maker is thine husband, (the Lord of hosts is his name);’ and



‘and thy Redeemer the holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called.’ See also Hof. ii. 19. 20. ‘I will betroth thee unto me for ever.’

7. God from a throne of grace is to be viewed as a pardoning God, issuing forth indemnities unto guilty rebels, who have violated his laws, and trampled upon his authority. From a throne of justice he can only be viewed as a condemning God, pronouncing and executing the righteous sentence of a broken law upon sinners who have transgressed it; and when the holiest of saints that ever breathed come to deal with God upon this footing, they are made to cry out, ‘O Lord, who shall stand?’ Nothing but ‘tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, to every soul of man that doth evil.’ But O glory to God in the highest, that by the reign of grace, through the righteousness of Christ, he appears in a quite other view, namely, as a ‘God forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin;’ yea, glorying in it as his prerogative, Is. xliii. 25. offering and bidding his pardons upon the guiltiest of criminals, Is. i. 18. ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

8. From a throne of grace God appears to us as a God of infinite bounty and liberality. And O what a pleasant view is this to the poor and needy! Jam. i. 5. ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.’ From a throne of grace he gives, and gives liberally, and gives without upbraiding. O Sirs, grace is not for inholding, but for

for out-giving; grace could not be grace if it were otherwise. Never was there a throne like this throne of grace, which has its very nature and standing by liberality. How soon would it spend the substance of the greatest and richest kings upon earth, to give to every one that had a mind to ask? If they kept open doors and open treasuries for all, and made every one welcome to come and take whatever they pleased, how soon would their treasuries be emptied? But, O Sirs, the treasuries of this throne are not only inexhaustible, but they are not in the least impaired by out-giving: however much grace has been given out from this throne to the sons of men, (and the distributions already have been very large), yet there is as much grace behind as ever. Yea, the very glory, riches, and splendor of this throne, lies in the large, free, and liberal distributions, that are made to the poor and needy sinners, who come to it for grace and mercy; and the King makes all welcome without exception: *Is. lv. 1.* 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come  
' ye to the waters,' &c.

4 9. He is to be viewed from a throne of grace as a prayer-hearing God: *Psal. lxxv. 2.* 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' He sits upon his throne encouraging all who have any business with him to come forward with boldness, and present their petitions to him, assuring them that their bills of request shall not be cast over bar: *Matth. vii. 7.* 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' The prayer of faith is the stated means of God's appointment for drawing forth promised mercy and grace: *Ezek. xxxvi. 37.* 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will  
' yet

‘yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to  
 ‘do it for them.’ So open-hearted is the King, that  
 his heart opens his ear to hear, and his hand to give.  
 When we have asked great things of him, he quarrels  
 us that we have not asked more and greater things;  
 and bids us ask, and we shall receive, that our joy  
 may be full. The voice of prayer makes a sweet and  
 melodious sound at this throne: Cant. ii. 14. ‘Let  
 ‘me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for  
 ‘sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.’

5 10. *Lastly*, View him upon a throne of grace,  
 and you shall see him as your <sup>our</sup> own God. Where-  
 ever we find God in all the word appearing from a  
 throne of grace to sinners, we shall still find him as-  
 serting himself to be ‘their God’ in Christ. Upon  
 this throne he appears unto Abraham: and what says  
 he to him? Gen xvii. 7. ‘I will establish my cove-  
 ‘nant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,  
 ‘in their generations, for an everlasting covenant;  
 ‘to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.’  
 When this covenant was renewed, or of new publish-  
 ed at mount Sinai, he says, ‘I am the Lord thy God.’  
 This is the ordinary stile of the covenant of grace  
 which issues from a throne of grace, ‘I will be their  
 ‘God, and they shall be my people.’ Now, what  
 can be God’s design in appearing to us sinners after  
 such a manner, but that we, who had forfeited all  
 claim to him by the breach of the first covenant, may  
 claim him as our God, even our own God, upon the  
 footing of free grace. There is so much sweetness,  
 grace, mercy, love, and salvation in God manifesting  
 himself from a throne of grace, that the soul, when-  
 ever it views him by faith, it is laid under an invin-



cible, though sweet necessity, to claim him as its own God in Christ, saying with Thomas, 'My Lord, and my God.' He that is my God, is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues 'from death.' And faith having once fixed the soul's claim to God in Christ upon the covenant ground and grant, it will maintain its claim to him upon the same ground, even when clouds and darkness are round about him; as the church doth, *Is. xlix. 14.* 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' Thus you see what amiable views of the divine Majesty are to be had from a throne of grace, or from God manifesting himself in the flesh, dealing with sinners according to gospel-grace.

I come, in the *third* place, to offer a few scriptural remarks anent this throne.

1. I remark, that this throne is called 'the throne of God, and of the Lamb,' *Rev. xxii. 1.* By which expression we are taught, that both Father and Son are equally glorified in this administration of grace; there is no disjoining of them, either as to their essence, interests, glory, or administration. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' says Christ. As they act by a joint power in the kingdom of Providence; so they act in the same manner in the kingdom of grace. And it is the will of God 'that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;' and 'every tongue' must 'confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. If the throne were only called 'The throne of God,' it were enough to scar a guilty sinner from ever looking towards it: but when it is called, 'The throne of God, and of the Lamb,' this furnishes

nishes our souls with a more amiable view of the divine Majesty, and declares him to be a God of peace, and that he is like a meek lamb to every soul that comes to him in the way of his own ordination: his terror needs not make us afraid.

2. I remark, that 'a pure river of water of life, 'clear as crystal, doth proceed out of' this throne, Rev. xxii. 1. By which I know some (and I was once of their mind) do understand only these rivers of pleasures, and that fulness of joy, which the saints in glory are possessed of in the immediate vision and fruition of God for evermore: I do not exclude this meaning. But to me it is clear from the 17th verse of the same chapter, that the river of water of life spoken of in the 1st verse, has a respect even to the church militant here upon earth; because, verse 17. there is an invitation by the Spirit and the bride given to all to come, and take of these waters of life freely, which proceed, verse 1. from the throne of God, and of the Lamb. And therefore I do think, that by this river issuing from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, we are to understand the Holy Spirit of God, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, with his quickening, cleansing, and comforting influences. This is compared frequently unto a river or flood in scripture, Is. xxxv. 6, 7. Is. xlv. 3. Not a rivulet or brook, but a river, to signify the plentiful, free, and liberal communications of the Spirit and grace of God that should follow upon Christ's exaltation to the throne in our nature. And this is not a muddy pool, but a pure river: the Spirit of Christ is a holy Spirit, and purifies the soul from the filth of sin. It is a river of 'water of life,' because he has life in

himself, and quickens the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. It is said to 'be clear as crystal,' because he is a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and opens the eye-sight of the blinded understanding to know the things that are freely given us of God.

3. I remark, that the Lamb is said to be 'in the midst of the throne,' Rev. v. 6. Rev. vii. 17. Which not only signifies the glory of his exalted state, having all power in heaven and in earth, but more especially I judge this expression designed for the encouragement of faith, that we may 'come with boldness to the throne, for grace and mercy to help in time of need.' Why, the meek and mild Lamb is 'in the midst of the throne,' ready to take us by the hand, to hear and plead our cause. He is a ready and diligent Advocate; he is never out of the way, or absent when our cause is tabled, as other advocates and friends many times are, when we have most need of them, and of their moyen and interest. 'We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.' We have him as our Advocate with the Father, continually appearing in the presence of God for us.

4. I remark that 'the seven Spirits are before the throne,' Rev. i. 4. So Rev. v. 6. 'The seven Spirits are sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain, in the midst of the throne, into all the earth.' By which is signified the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost in the application of the redemption purchased by Christ; called *seven*, because of the variety of his influences and operations. These are said to be 'before the throne,' to shew how ready the Spirit of God is to execute all the acts of grace that are emitted



ted from the throne of grace, and to make them effectual by his infinite energy and power. And these seven Spirits of God are said to be 'sent forth from the Lamb as it were slain,' to let us know, that the sending, or down-pouring of the Spirit, and of his influences, is the fruit and effect of the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death, and of his prevalent intercession, grounded upon his propitiation.

5. I remark, that this throne 'standeth on mount Zion,' Rev. xiv. 1. The Lamb standeth there, and where the Lamb standeth, there must the throne stand also, for he is always in the midst of it. By 'mount Zion,' which is an Old Testament expression, I understand the church of God, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven. They are all surrounding the same throne; like Jacob's ladder, the foot of it stood in Bethel upon earth, but the top of it reached the heavens. So this throne of grace standeth upon the earth in Bethel, the house of the living God, though indeed the top of it is high and lifted up above the height of the highest heavens: and all believers are come unto it, whether they be in heaven or earth, though some be a step higher than others, the glory of saints militant and triumphant differing only in degrees. Let a believer be in what part of the world he will, still he will by faith make his way to a throne of grace, that is, to a reconciled God in Christ, who is every where present, and a very present help in the time of need.

6. I remark, that this throne is surrounded with a rainbow: Rev. iv. 3. 'There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.'

Which I pass at present, because I intend a discourse upon it apart.

7. I remark, that this throne is crouded with innumerable attendants in the church militant and triumphant, who are all paying the tribute of worship and homage unto him that sits upon it: Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. 'And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Where you see all the saints in heaven and earth are surrounding this glorious throne of which we now speak. O blessed are they whom he chooseth and causeth to approach unto him among this numerous company.

8. I remark, that the basis and foundation of this throne is *the righteousness of Christ*. It is laid in justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God. 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' But this leads to,

II. The *second* thing proposed in the method, which is to *speak of the foundation of this throne*, and that is, *justice and judgment*.

For

For clearing of this, 1. Take a few propositions;  
2. A few properties of this foundation.

*First*, Take a few propositions.

1. 'When God had created man, he entered into  
' a covenant of life with him, upon condition of per-  
' fect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree  
' of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of  
' death.'

2. Man, by the breach of this covenant, has in-  
curred the penalty thereof, 'whereby all mankind  
' have lost communion with God, are under his  
' wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries  
' in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell  
' for ever.'

3. God in his amazing grace and love both ad-  
mitted of a surety, and provided one, even his eternal  
Son, who voluntarily undertook our redemption, and  
was actually substitute in our room. *He laid on him the  
iniquity of us all.*

4. The Son of God, in consequence of his under-  
taking as our surety, having assumed our nature, and  
put himself in our law-place, a cry was made in hea-  
ven by justice, 'Awake, O sword, against my shep-  
' herd, and against the man that is my fellow: smite  
' the shepherd, make thyself drunk with his royal  
' blood; do not spare him, exact the debt of him to  
' the utmost farthing.' He endured the curse in our  
room, *being made a curse for us.*

5. Whatever justice demanded of the surety, it was  
executed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Did justice de-  
mand that the cautioner should be of one common  
nature with the sinner? This accordingly is executed;  
for 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;'



he was made of a woman, and took part of the children's flesh; he became our kinsman, that the right of redemption might belong to him. Did justice demand that the honour of the holy law should be repaired by a perfect obedience? This accordingly is executed by the surety; for he 'fulfilled all righteousness,' he 'magnified the law, and made it honourable.' Did justice demand that the curse and penalty of the law should be endured? This is accordingly executed; for he was *made a curse for us*, that he might *redeem us from the curse of the law*. Did justice demand that the head of the old serpent should be bruised, and that vengeance should be executed upon the grand enemy of God's glory, and of man's good and happiness? This accordingly is done; for he 'spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross.' Did justice demand that sin, the first-born of the devil, should be put out of the way? This accordingly is done; for he 'finished transgression, and made an end of sin; he condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be defiled in us.'

6. Justice being satisfied, and the law magnified, and the Lord well pleased for the righteousness sake of the glorious surety, God thereupon rears up a throne of grace, and proclaims himself to be, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,—forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin, &c.'; and accordingly passes acts of grace from this throne, saying, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will sprinkle them with clean water;' and the like. And

*Heb 8-10 to 12*

thus

thus you see upon what basis or foundation the throne of grace is reared.

*Secondly*, I shall give you a few qualities or properties of the foundation of this throne, where grace reigns through righteousness.

1. It is an *ancient* foundation; for Christ was 'set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was;' he is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' And upon the credit of his promise to satisfy justice in the fulness of time, all the Old Testament saints were saved.

2. It is a foundation of God's own laying: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a foundation.' He had pleasure in laying it. When he laid it decretively from all eternity, he did it with pleasure: *I have found a ransom*; he speaks of it with a kind of gloriation and boasting: 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty: I have found David my servant.' When he laid it actually in his incarnation, he did it with pleasure: 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him.' When he laid this foundation doctrinally in Zion, he did it with pleasure: Is. xxviii. 16. he proclaims to the world, declaring, that 'whosoever builds upon it, shall not be ashamed.'

3. It is a *firm* foundation upon which God has built his throne of grace; it is the surest foundation on which a throne can be built. The throne of iniquity, or the throne that is founded upon injustice, shall surely be overturned: but here is a throne built upon justice and judgment. Christ is called a 'rock,' 'Upon this rock I will build my church;' and the church and the throne of grace have the same bottom.

4. It is a *tried* foundation. Justice tried it, and found it firm and stable; when mountains of wrath and vengeance were rolled upon it, it bore up under all. The powers of hell tried to overturn this foundation: but their kingdom and power was broken in pieces in the enterprize; the little stone cut out of the mountain, broke the head of the great Goliath. The saints have all tried this foundation, and proclaim it sufficient to bear their weight; yea, it is sufficient to bear the weight of all mankind, yea, of millions of worlds, if they existed, and would venture upon it: 'He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.'

5. It is a *precious* foundation: 'We are not reckoned with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' The gold and silver cannot equal it; the topaz of Ethiopia is not to be named in one day with it; it is more glorious and excellent by far than all the mountains of prey.

6. It is a most *beautiful* foundation. What God says of his church, Is. liv. 11. is much more true of the throne of grace, 'Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.' There is such a beauty in this foundation of the throne of grace, that it reflects a beauty upon every one that approacheth it; so that they come away from it 'like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.'

7. To crown all, it is a *perpetual, durable, and everlasting* foundation: and hence comes the perpetuity of the throne itself, Psal. lxxxix 4. 'Thy seed will



‘ will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to  
 ‘ all generations.’ So Psal. lxxii. 17. ‘ His name  
 ‘ shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued  
 ‘ as long as the sun.’ The priesthood of Christ is the  
 foundation of the throne of grace; and this priesthood  
 is to continue, by the oath of God : Psal. cx. 4.  
 ‘ The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou  
 ‘ art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.’  
 I proceed now to,

210 III. The *third* general head in the method. Hav-  
 ing viewed the foundation, let us next take a view of  
 some pillars wherewith this throne, this royal admini-  
 stration of grace, is supported, and which contribute  
 not a little to its stability. And, not to enlarge upon  
 particulars, the foundation of this throne being laid in  
 the satisfaction of justice, all the other perfections, or  
 attributes of the divine nature, fall in for the support  
 of the reign and administration of grace. ‘ Mercy  
 ‘ and truth are met together : righteousness and peace’  
 do ‘ kiss each other ;’ they sweetly join hand in pro-  
 moting this glorious design, as you see in the context.  
 O, says infinite wisdom, all my immense treasures  
 shall dwell bodily in the man Christ Jesus, he shall be  
 ‘ the wisdom of God in a mystery,’ that so he may be  
 in a capacity to hold the reins, and manage all things  
 in heaven and earth, for the advancement of the glory  
 of free grace, reigning through righteousness to eternal  
 life. O, says infinite power, ‘ with him my hand  
 ‘ shall be established : mine arm also shall strengthen  
 ‘ him’ in his undertaking. ‘ I will beat down his  
 ‘ foes before his face, and greatly plague them that  
 D 6 ‘ hate

‘hate him.’ O, says holiness, although I be ‘of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,’ yet I plainly see, that justice being satisfied for the guilt of sin in the death of the Son of God, the filth of it shall be hid out of my sight, and his blood shall be a laver to wash it away, that I be not offended: and therefore I am so far from hindering this administration of grace through Christ, that I lay myself in pledge to promote and carry on the glorious design: ‘Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.’ O, says mercy, I am so fit to grace, that I cannot shun to give my vote, that the throne of grace should go on apace, ‘My mercy will I keep for him for evermore. My mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.’ O, says the faithfulness and veracity of God, whatever promises grace hath made, in a covenant of grace, I bind and oblige myself to make them good: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle’ of God’s word of grace shall never fall to the ground. ‘I will not take my love from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.’ And thus I have given you a short view of these glorious pillars which contribute to the establishment of the throne of grace, upon the foundation of justice and judgment.

3 IV. The *fourth* thing is, to ‘inquire why it is God will have justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the surety, to be the foundation of his throne of grace?’

I shall not multiply reasons for this, but shall only touch upon one for all, which the apostle gives, Rom.

v. 21. viz. 'That grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.' So that if it be asked, Why will God have it so, that justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the surety, should be the foundation of the throne of grace? The answer is, 'That grace might reign through righteousness;' that the glory of grace might be displayed in a consistency with the honours of divine justice.

Here a question offers, How does grace reign, or how is the glory of grace displayed in and by the righteousness of a surety?

*Ans.* 1. Grace reigns and is displayed in the contrivance of this righteousness; for it is the device of infinite wisdom, animated and inspired by free grace. When man had fallen under the sentence of the law, justice was ready to execute judgment upon him: but grace cries, Stop, and stay thy hand, for *I have found a ransom.* 2 Sam. xiv. 14. 'God doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled.' Our first parents they provoked God to drive them out of Paradise, and accordingly they were actually driven out of his presence; but infinite wisdom, actuated and animated by the bowels of mercy, contrives a way how banished man may be brought home again in a consistency with justice, and that is by the righteousness of the Messiah.

2. Grace reigns and is displayed in the acceptation of this righteousness. What but infinite love and grace could prevail with inexorable justice, so far to dispense with the rigour of the law, as to admit of a surety's righteousness in the room of the sinner! But this I touched upon already. And therefore,

3. Grace reigns in the impetration of this righteousness;



ousness; for *God*, in his amazing grace, 'sent forth  
 ' his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to  
 ' redeem them that were under the law.' That right-  
 teousness whereby we are justified, is the very right-  
 teousness of God in our nature, he wrought it by his  
 doing and dying. O how does grace reign here! Faith's  
 views of this may fill us all with wonder, and make us cry  
 with the church, Isa. lxiii. 1. 'Who is  
 ' this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments  
 ' from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel,  
 ' travelling in the greatness of his strength?'

4. Grace reigns in the revelation of this righteousness.  
 Grace was not content to contrive and bring about this  
 righteousness, but the news of it must be published and  
 proclaimed to a lost world, as it were by sound of trumpet.  
 Hence the apostle, Rom. i. 17. when he would give us an  
 account of the sum and substance of the gospel, he does it in  
 one word, 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation;  
 ' for therein is revealed the righteousness of God.' O how  
 forward was the grace of God to have the proclamation  
 anent the satisfaction of justice by a surety issued out!  
 Adam had scarce sinned, till grace intimates the plot unto  
 him in the first promise, 'The seed of the woman shall  
 bruise the head of the serpent.' The Messiah is scarce  
 born in Bethlehem, till an angel is dispatched from  
 heaven to notify it to the shepherds, 'Unto you is born  
 this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ  
 the Lord.'

5. Grace reigns and is displayed in the appropriation,  
 or the bringing near of this righteousness to the sinner in  
 a preached gospel. Not only does grace reveal the  
 righteousness of God, but it brings it near

to

to the sinner, in order to be accepted and received: *Is. xlii. 12, 13.* 'Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, &c.' It is brought near to the sinner, just as the manna was brought near to Israel, when it fell about their tent-doors; they had not far to go for it.

6. Grace reigns and is displayed in the imputation of this righteousness. And indeed there is a great mystery of grace here, that cannot be expressed in words; how a guilty sinner, that has violated the law, and is obnoxious to justice, comes to be sustained in the sight of God as though he had fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice in his own person, and to be put in case to say, 'Who shall lay any thing to' my charge? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?'

7. Grace reigns in the soul's acceptance of this righteousness by faith. There is nothing in all the world that runs so cross to proud nature, as to renounce all its own righteousness, its obedience, duties, endeavours, its own grace and holiness, in point of acceptance, and to submit to the righteousness of another, and to be obliged to the doing and dying of the Son of God alone. This was a stone of stumbling to the Jews, they could never imagine any other way of justification before God but 'by the works of the law:' and therefore they 'went about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit unto the righteousness of God.' Now, I say, to unhinge a sinner from this legal bottom, to bring down these towering imaginations of a righteousness in ourselves, to cast down the *refuge of lies*, and to bring the proud  
con-

conceited sinner that length, as to own and acknowledge, that his own righteousness is but *as filthy rags*, saying, 'Surely in the Lord' only 'have I righteousness and strength: in him' will I 'be justified, and 'in him' alone will I 'glory.' I say, grace reigns, and is wonderfully displayed in all this.

8. Grace reigns through righteousness, inasmuch as that it is by the revelation of this justice-satisfying righteousness, that grace conquers and powerfully subdues sinners, brings them under its own government and dominion. The apostle speaking of believers, Rom. vi. 14. says, 'Ye are not under the law, but 'under grace;' that is, ye are brought in under the government and administration of grace. But what way is it that grace conquers them? what is the great engine made use of for this end? It is just the revelation of the righteousness of Christ in the gospel, Rom. i. 16. 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.' What way? Mark the expression, vers. 17. 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from 'faith to faith.' From which it is plain, that the preaching of an imputed righteousness, as the alone ground of a sinner's acceptance, is the very pith and marrow of the gospel. Some now a-days, they have got a way of preaching, which, I believe, will never convert a soul; they deliver fine elegant harangues of morality; adorning them with all the flowers of rhetoric; but, in the mean time, they do but stink in the nostrils of a solid Christian. Why? Because though they preach up a moral righteousness, yet they have little or nothing of the righteousness of Christ, which is the very basis and foundation of a throne of grace: and when that is wanting, they want the true

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Shibboleth of the gospel; for the gospel is a revelation of 'the righteousness of God; and this makes it to be 'the power of God unto salvation.'

Here I judge it not amiss to subjoin a quotation from the great and judicious Owen to this purpose, in his commentary on the Hebrews, chap. v. 7. 'Some are 'of the mind,' says he, 'that the whole business of 'ministers is to be conversant in and about morality. 'For this fountain and spring of grace,' the righteousness and satisfaction of Christ; 'this basis of eternal glory; this evidence and demonstration of divine 'wisdom, holiness, righteousness, and love; this 'great discovery of the purity of the law, and vileness 'of sin; this first, great, principal subject of the 'gospel, and motive of faith and obedience; this 'root and cause of all peace with God, all sincere 'and incorrupted love toward him, of all joy and 'consolation from him, they think it scarcely deserves 'a place in the objects of their contemplation, and 'are ready to guess, that what men write and talk about it is but *phrases, canting, and fanatical*. But 'such as are admitted into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, will not so easily part with their 'immortal interest and concern therein. Yea, I fear 'not to say, that he is likely to be the best, the most 'humble, the most holy and fruitful Christian, who 'is most sedulous and diligent in spiritual inquiries 'into this great mystery of the reconciliation of God 'unto sinners by the blood of the cross, and in the 'exercise of faith about it. Nor is there any such 'powerful means of preserving the soul in a constant 'abhorrence of sin, and watchfulness against it, as a 'due

‘ due apprehension of what it cost to make atonement  
‘ for it.’

V. The *fifth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*, in the following particulars.

1. Is it so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon the ever-blessed surety, is the foundation of a throne of grace? then hence we may see what an expensive piece of work a throne of grace is. Why, the foundation of it is laid in the death and blood of the Son of God. When God is about to erect a throne of glory for himself, as the great Creator and Governor of the world, he makes little or no ceremony about it; he only says, *Let it be*, and immediately heaven which is his throne, and the earth which is his footstool, springs out of nothing in a wonderful order: but when the throne of grace is to be reared, justice must be satisfied, and judgment executed upon the Son of God; he must ‘ become sin for us, and a  
‘ curse for us; that the righteousness of the law might  
‘ be fulfilled in us, and we made the righteousness of  
‘ God in him.’

2. See from this doctrine the glory of a gospel-dispensation. We read sometimes of ‘ the glorious  
‘ gospel of the blessed God;’ why, here is the reason of the denomination, the royal majesty of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of his eternal Son, is here displayed and manifested. God has erected a glorious high throne for the place of his sanctuary; and ‘ for the beauty of his ornament, he  
‘ hath set it in majesty,’ Ezek. vii. 20. There was much of the divine glory manifested in the delivery  
of

of the law at mount Sinai, and in the typical dispensation of the Old Testament: but, O! all that glory vanished like a shadow at the greater glory that is manifested in the actual erection of a throne of grace, by the incarnation, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the manifestation of him that is made by the word now under the New Testament: 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. 'But  
 ' if the ministration of death, written and engraven  
 ' in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel  
 ' could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses,  
 ' for the glory of his countenance, which glory was  
 ' to be done away; how shall not the ministration of  
 ' the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration  
 ' of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even  
 ' that which was made glorious, had no glory in this  
 ' respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For  
 ' if that which is done away was glorious, much more  
 ' that which remaineth is glorious.' O Sirs, let us prize our mercy, who live under the New Testament dispensation, in which 'all we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,' may be  
 ' changed into the same image, from glory to glory,  
 ' as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

3. If it be so that justice satisfied, and judgment executed upon Christ, is the foundation of a throne of grace; then see hence, that the salvation of a lost sinner by grace is very consistent with the honour of divine justice; why, justice and judgment are the very habitation of his throne. Some poor souls, when they fall under the challenges and awakenings of conscience, are ready to think and say, O it is needless

for



for me ever to think that God will extend his grace and mercy to me: why, my sins are of such a bloody hue, of such an aggravated nature, that I cannot think that ever it will stand with the justice of God to pity and pardon, or save the like of me. But, O Sirs, will you consider that God has already taken care for the satisfaction of his justice, in the death and blood of his eternal Son, and laid the foundation of his throne of grace upon that. And therefore you are not to think or imagine, that justice will be your enemy in coming for grace and mercy to a throne of grace: no, no; God is just and righteous in saving the sinner that comes to this throne, as well as in damning the sinner that will not come. Yea, let me tell you, that the justice of God gets more glory in saving of sinners through the blood and satisfaction of Jesus, than in the damnation and ruin of all the reprobates and unbelievers in the world; for the believing sinner, he takes the ransom that God has found, and presents that to justice, and the Lord is well pleased with this; he smells a sweet favour in this propitiatory sacrifice.

4. See hence the excellency and infinite value of the blood of Jesus, and how much we owe to it; why, by this blood justice is satisfied, and thereby a foundation laid for a throne of grace, unto which we are called to come with boldness: Heb. x. 19. 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' There are these two things effected by the blood of Jesus, from which our obligation to it will especially appear. (1.) By this blood sprinkled upon the tribunal of justice, the tribunal itself is turned to a mercy-seat; an angry God

is reconciled and pacified, and invites the guilty sinner to come for grace and mercy to help him. (2.) By this blood the curse of the law is abolished; The curse of a broken law stands as an insuperable bar in the way of our access to God; but now, by the blood of Jesus, this hand-writing that was against us is cancelled, being nailed to the cross. And whenever this blood is applied by faith, the sentence goes forth from a throne of grace, There is no more condemnation for the man, for he is in Christ, under the covert of blood. It is God that justifieth him; who is he that dare condemn him? God the great Law-giver justifieth; and what has any other to say against him, if the Law-giver assails him?

5. Has God erected a throne of grace at the expence of the death and satisfaction of his eternal Son? Then I would have you to try, whether you be courtiers about this throne. Wast thou ever at a throne of grace, man, woman? Perhaps you may think this a very strange question. Why, say you, have you so little charity as to think that we never prayed? Blessed be God we are at a throne of grace every morning and evening; we read, hear, pray, communicate, and yet will you ask, if ever we were at a throne of grace? I answer, A man may do all that, and never yet really come to this throne, that has judgment and justice for its foundation and habitation. What then is it to come to a throne of grace? *Answ.* It is to come out of yourself unto a God in Christ, as your only hope and help; it is to receive Christ, and rest on him, for all these ends and uses for which he is revealed and offered in the glorious gospel. In one word, to come to a throne of grace, is, by faith in the blood

blood of Jesus, to enter into the presence of a holy God. How shall I know if ever I thus came to this throne? *Answ.* There are a few things in the context which follows my text, which may be improven as marks for your trial. As,

1<sup>st</sup>, If ever you have come to a throne of grace, you have seen mercy and truth going before the face of him that sits on the throne. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne;* and what follows? *Mercy and truth shall go before his face;* that is, not only mercy in the abstract, but mercy connected with, and conveyed in a word of truth. I think it very remarkable, that these two, mercy and truth, are commonly linked together in scripture, Psal. lxxxv. 10. 'Mercy and truth are met together.' John i. 17. 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;' and, vers. 14. Christ is said to be 'full of grace and truth.' Why are these joined together? The plain reason is, because all the mercy that is in the heart of God, is conveyed in a true and faithful word of promise: so that whatever mercy we want from God, we must always look for it in a promise or word of truth: *What God has joined, no man must put asunder.* Some have a way of grasping at the mercy of God absolutely considered, never viewing it as it is in Christ, or as it is in the covenant and word of truth. But, Sirs, the mercy of God in this view never saved a sinner: they that do really come to a throne of grace, and view God as he is in Christ, they see mercy and truth coupled together, and they dare not claim mercy, but upon the ground of the promise or covenant established in Christ, and *this is all their salvation.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, If ever you was really at the throne, you have



have heard the joyful sound that issueth out from the throne: vers. 15. 'Blessed is the people that know 'the joyful sound,' viz. the joyful sound of the King's voice that sits on the throne of grace. The voice of a God in Christ has a certain peculiar air with it, whereby the believer knows it from the voice of a stranger: *My sheep*, says Christ, *know my voice*. Cant. ii. 8. no sooner does Christ speak, but immediately the spouse cries, It is 'the voice of my beloved! 'behold, he cometh.' O Sirs, you are all hearing the sound of a man's voice; but I ask, Do you hear the voice of Christ coming forth from a throne of grace? His words they are 'spirit and life.' They have such a divine majesty and melody in them, that they make an echo of praise to rebound back to heaven: hence we read, that upon the publication of the gospel among the Gentiles, songs are heard ascending upward, Is. xxiv. 16.

3dly, If ever you came to this throne, and saw the King upon the throne, you will highly value the light of his countenance; you will put such a value upon his smiles, that you cannot think of living without them. His countenance will make day with you; and when he withdraws, all the stars of created comforts cannot supply his room.

4thly, The King's name will be like ointment poured forth: vers. 16. 'In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.' His name will be a strong tower to you, to which you will flee for safety; and there will be such a savour in it to thy soul, that thou wilt be ambitious to cause his name to be remembered in all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever.

5thly, If ever you were at this throne, and dignified with his acceptance and approbation, you will look upon his righteousness as the only ground of your promotion and advancement: vers. 16. 'In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.' O, will the poor soul say, it was not my goodness, my holiness, my righteousness, that brought me to this honour: no; it was the obedience and death of my surety, the righteousness that he brought in: 'In him have I righteousness; and I count all things but loss and dung that I may win him, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in him.'

6thly, He will be 'the glory of your strength,' and his strength will be your glory, vers. 17. When you are helped to the exercise of any grace, to do or suffer any thing for him, you will ascribe the glory of it to him alone: 'Not I, but the grace of God in me: Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name' be the 'glory.'

7thly, If ever you were at this throne of grace, you will be much taken up in admiring the freedom of his grace and love reigning through imputed righteousness; you will see grace written in capital letters on every step of the throne of grace, and in every step of your salvation: vers. 17. 'In thy' grace and 'favour our horn shall be exalted.' Was I elected from eternity? My election is of grace. Was I redeemed by the blood of Jesus? This is 'according to the riches of his grace.' Am I justified, sanctified, adopted, or effectually called? It is grace, grace that has done all; 'by the grace of God I am what I am.'

8thly, If you be acquaint with a throne of grace, a  
God

God of grace will be your only sanctuary, vers. 18. 'The Lord is our defence;' and what time you are afraid, you will trust in him. He will be to you 'an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land;' for he is 'the strength of the poor, and of the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.' When you are pursued by sin, by Satan, by the law, by conscience; when you are surrounded with trouble from without, or from within, you will turn in to him as your *strong-hold*, as it is said of the prisoners of hope.

9thly, If you be acquaint with a throne of grace, the King that sits upon the throne will be your only Lord and Sovereign: vers. 18. 'The holy One of Israel is our King.' You will renounce allegiance to other lords, and make mention of his name, saying, 'The Lord is my judge, the Lord is my law-giver, the Lord is my king, he will save me.' And you will love your King so well, that you will love his law, and approve of it as 'holy, just, and good,' because it is a transcript of the holiness of his nature: you will say with David, 'I esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right: His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.' Now, try yourselves by these things, whether you be courtiers at this throne of grace, which hath justice satisfied, and judgment executed on the surety, for its basis or foundation. You may easily remember these marks, because they are all in the text, and three verses following.

6. Is it so, that God has erected a throne of grace



at the expense of the satisfaction of his justice? O then, Sirs, I would invite you all to come to this throne. People usually need little intreaty to come to the thrones of earthly princes: every body is ambitious to be near the throne. Well, Sirs, I invite, I call, beseech, and intreat you to draw near to the throne of the Prince of the Kings of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Now, that I may carry home the exhortation the more effectually upon your souls, I shall endeavour to obviate a few practical questions, that will readily arise in your minds upon such a call or exhortation.

*Quest. 1.* Who is it that calls us? We hear you that are ministers calling us to come to the throne of grace; that is not enough to us, we would know if the King himself would make us welcome. I answer, It is not we, but the King himself that calls you to come to his throne. We that are ministers are only the heralds sent forth to intimate and proclaim the King's pleasure; and if you ask for our instructions or commission, we shall very readily produce them, that you may read them with your own eyes under the King's hand. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, 21. 'God was  
' in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not  
' imputing their trespasses unto them;' (there is the throne of grace, to wit, a God reconciling the world to himself; our commission follows in the close of the 19th, and in the 20th verse); 'and hath committed  
' unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then  
' we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did  
' beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be  
' ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to  
' be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be  
' made

'made the righteousness of God in him.' Now, there is our commission, the word of reconciliation is committed to us, that is, the publication of this gospel of the grace of God; and when we invite you to come to a reconciled God in Christ, we speak in the name of God, and we are in the very room of Christ. What would you think, if Christ were standing in my place speaking to you, requiring and inviting you to come to his throne for grace and mercy? Well, the case is the very same, when we act by commission from him. So then it is God that calls you by us.

*Quest. 2.* Whom does he call? Does God call every body to come to his throne of grace? That is not an ordinary thing; all the subjects are not allowed to come near the throne, but only some peculiar favourites. *Answ.* It is true it is so among earthly princes; it is only some peculiar favourites whom they allow to approach the throne or seat of majesty, otherwise their thrones would be too much crowded. But it is otherwise in the court of the great King, who hath justice and judgment for the habitation of his throne; for all and every one that hears the joyful sound of the gospel, which issues out of the throne, are invited and called to come to the throne of grace. And this will appear if you consider,

1. The extensiveness of the commission which God has given to ministers: Mark xvi. 15. 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;' that is, to Jews and Gentiles, Barbarians, Scythians, bond or free, noble and ignoble. Every rational soul you shall meet with, sprung of Adam, go preach the gospel to them; that is, tell them in the

name of a God of grace this good news, that God's throne is now accessible, and every one that has a mind may come to it for grace and mercy to help in time of need.

2. The command of God enjoining you to come to a throne of grace is unto all: 1 John iii. 23. 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ;' which is all one with coming to a throne of grace. The law of believing extends to all mankind that hear this gospel. And remember that, for disobedience unto this law, you are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you.

3. As the command of believing is to all, so the promise of welcome to a throne of grace is to all and every one, for their encouragement to come. 'Him that cometh to me,' says Christ, 'I will in no wise cast out: Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' Do not think that the promise in the exhibition belongs only to the elect, or to believers: no, no; 'the promise is unto you, and to your seed, and to all that are afar off.' Thus, I say, all that live under the joyful sound of the gospel are called to come to a throne of grace.

*Quest. 3.* You bid us come to a throne of grace; but where is it? we do not know where to find it. I answer, Where ever you have access to God in any of the duties of his worship, there you may find the throne of grace. Indeed under the Old-Testament, when the centre of worship was confined to the temple of Jerusalem, the poor Gentiles were at a loss where to come to a throne of grace; but now, under the New-Testament, the centre of worship is removed



ved from them, and placed among us Gentiles; so that whatever part of the earth you be upon, if the heavens be above your head, you need not be at a loss where to find a throne of grace: though you were shut up in a prison or dungeon, though you were driven to the utmost part of the earth, from friend, kin, and ally; yet you cannot be driven away from a throne of grace. In a word, there is no place on this side of hell but you may find this throne, a God in Christ being a God every where present; 'he is not far from every one of us.' So much seems to be intimated by Christ to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21, 22, 23. 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.'

*Quest.* 4. What is the way that we are to take to win at this throne of grace? *Answ.* In all the world I know of no way but one, and that is Christ: John xiv. 6. 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' As Christ, or God in Christ, is the throne, so he is also the way to the throne. An incarnate Deity is the sinner's way to God, as well as God's way to the sinner: Heb. x. 19. 20. 'We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.' The human nature of Christ assumed to the personality of the Son of

God, is the porch or gate by which we enter into the throne of grace: John x. 9. 'I am the door: by me  
 ' if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall  
 ' go in and out, and find pasture.' This door of the human nature of Christ was broken into shivers by the hammer of God's wrath, that so our way might be patent to a throne of grace, to a reconciled God: hence we read of the rending of the vail of the temple from top to bottom at the death of Christ. This then is *the gate of God*, and by it the sinner may, and the saint doth *enter into the court of the great King*, and *come to his seat*. Some folk they have a mistaken notion, as if they actually came to a throne of grace every time that they give their bodily presence at the ordinances of God's appointment, such as prayer, hearing the word, communicating, or the like. I own indeed, that these external duties are the outer gates and porches by which we come to the throne, therefore called *the gates of Zion*, especially public ordinances are intended by that denomination: but, O Sirs, many a man comes to these gates that never comes to the throne; of such the Lord complains, saying, 'This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.' True coming, or drawing near to a throne of grace, is an inward thing; it is done by an act of the heart; for 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' When the heart goeth into God in Christ, for grace and mercy to help in time of need, that is a coming to a throne of grace. So then, I say, Christ is the only way to the throne, as he is the throne itself.

Quest. 5.

*Quest. 5.* After what manner should we come to this throne ?

*Answ. 1.* If you would come aright, you would come with an empty hand. Do not bring money or price with you ; for when we come to a throne of grace, we come to get, but not to give any thing to the Lord. You that make a price of your prayers, communicating, and other good deeds and qualifications, you cannot come speed at the throne of grace. Remember that it is a *throne of grace*, and therefore nothing is to be gotten there in a way of debt.

2. Come with enlarged desires after what you come to ask : for ‘ he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth ‘ the hungry soul with goodness.

3. Come with confidence, hope, and filial boldness. God would not have you to come hanging your heads, like condemned criminals coming to their judge to receive a sentence of death : no ; but he would have us come to him with confidence, as children to a father, trusting in him, and looking for good things at his hand, because of his goodness, veracity, and other perfections manifested in Christ. Come, I say, with hope and expectation ; for ‘ he ‘ taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that ‘ hope in his mercy.’ It is a general fault among us, that we go to God in prayer, and other ordinances, as if he were a niggard of his blessings, or had ill will to part with his grace. But, O Sirs, this is not the way to speed :—Let not that man expect to receive any thing from the Lord, that comes doubting and wavering, entertaining jealousies of the love and goodness of a reconciled God.

4. Come to his throne with importunity. Follow  
E 4 Jacob’s



Jacob's practice, 'I will not let thee go, except thou  
' blest me. The effectual fervent prayer of the right-  
'eous availeth much.'

5. Make much use of the Spirit, as a 'spirit of  
' grace and supplication,' that he may help your infir-  
mities at the throne. It is he that fills our mouths  
with arguments, and teaches us to pray 'with groan-  
'ings which cannot be uttered.' And he has prom-  
ised his Spirit to them that ask him.

The *last* use I make of the doctrine shall be direct-  
ed to believers, who are courtiers about this throne.  
And all I shall say to you shall be, 1. In a word of  
consolation; 2. Of exhortation.

*First*, A word of consolation. Know then, be-  
liever, for thy comfort, that 'the holy One of Israel  
' is thy King, and in his favour thy horn shall be ex-  
'alted; mercy and truth shall go before his face,'  
with a special view to thy happiness in time, and  
through eternity. All the grace and mercy that is  
in the heart of the King, is ordained for thee, and  
secured to thee by a well-ordered covenant. The  
whole of his administrations, whether of grace or of  
providence, are calculated for thy benefit and advan-  
tage, Rom. viii. 28. You are the children of the  
King, he has adopted thee to his family, yea, settled  
an inheritance upon thee, as 'heirs of God, and  
' joint-heirs with himself.' You are upon the King's  
secrets, and he will tell you things which he will not  
communicate to the rest of the world, even the se-  
crets of his government of grace. 'Unto you it is  
' given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,  
' but to others it is not given. The secret of the  
' Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew  
' them

‘them his covenant.’ And to crown all, there is no case thou canst be in while in the world, but thou wilt have an act of grace suited and adapted to thy circumstances, registrated in the court-book, I mean, in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, every act sealed with the blood of the King, touched with his royal sceptre; yea, thou hast the extract of it in thy hand. O what strong ground of consolation is here to you who by faith are acquainted with this throne!

A *second* word is of exhortation, or counsel to believers, who have come to this throne, in these following particulars.

1. Be often at the King’s court, especially on his court-days: I mean, attend his ordinances, especially on the Sabbath, which he has sanctified and consecrated for this end. Great men’s vassals are obliged to attend them upon their court-days; and is it not reasonable, that the subjects and vassals of the King of kings should pay this respect to him? Psal. xcvi. 6, 7, 8. ‘Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come into his courts.’ O honour your King by keeping his courts; for ‘one day in his courts is better than a thousand; it is better to be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell in the tents of sin; and those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.’

2. Let it not satisfy you to come to the court, unless

less you get access to the throne, and see the King's face; for it is the presence of the King that makes his courts and tabernacles amiable. Absalom was not satisfied to be at Jerusalem, unless he saw the king's face; so let it not satisfy you to attend ordinances, unless you get a visit from the God of ordinances. This was David's disposition, Psal. xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.' And if you have any acquaintance with the King, whose name is *gracious*, it will bring a damp upon your spirits, when you miss his presence in his courts; you will go mourning without the sun, crying, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!'

3. When the King calls you to court, or to come near to his throne, do not sit his order. When, by his word, or the motions of his Spirit, he says to thy soul, 'Seek ye my face,' let thy soul send back a ready answer, saying, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' When he says, 'Come,' let thy soul return the answer, 'Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God.' O he takes it ill when any sit his call, as you see in the case of the spouse, Cant. v. He comes to her, saying, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.' But she indulged carnal sloth; saying, 'I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' which provoked him to withdraw, till she is brought to regret her folly.

4. Beware



4. Beware of every thing that has a tendency to discount you, or to make the King cast down his countenance upon you ; for although he hates putting away, yet you may provoke him to cover his face, and to turn to you the back of his throne : yea, you may provoke him to carry towards you in such a way, that the very remembrance of him will be a trouble to you. Sometimes his own dearest favourites have so grieved his Spirit, that he has carried the quarrel to the gates of hell against them ; as we see in the case of David, ' Thine arrows stick fast in me,' says he, ' and thy hand presseth me sore : this grief I have, because of my sin.' You may by untenderness bring yourself to that pass, as to be made to cry, ' The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.' And therefore beware of every thing that may be offensive to your King. Beware of pride, for he beholds the proud afar off ; he thrusts the proud away from him, when they adventure to come near his throne. Beware of unbelief, for that is what he cannot endure. How unsuitable is it for his subjects and children to call him a liar ! This is a sin which turns you away from the Lord, and turns him away from you. Do not entertain jealousies of his kindness, after he has given the tokens thereof to your souls ; for it is a grieving of the Spirit of God to have his love-tokens called in question. Beware of untenderness : if there be not a close walking with God in the way of holiness, you need not expect to have the King's countenance ; for ' without holiness no man shall see the Lord : ' it is they that have clean hands, and a pure heart, that

shall stand in his holy hill, and have a place in his tabernacle.

5. Be very observant of the King's commandments. As the acts of grace, which I was speaking of, are the measure of faith, so the law of commandments is the measure of practice. Do not think that the court of grace, or the throne of grace, gives any indulgence to a detestable licentiousness: they are indeed carnal gossellers, and Antinomians with a witness, who entertain such a notion. No, the moral law of the ten commandments is supported with the authority of the King, whose name is *gracious and merciful*. As the law considered as a covenant of works, issueth from a throne of justice; so the same law considered as a rule of obedience, is issued forth from a throne of grace; as is plain from the preface of the ten commandments, *I am the Lord thy God*; that is, I am up-to thee a God of grace in Christ, a saving and a redeeming God: 'therefore thou shalt keep all my commandments.' O Sirs, the law, even as a rule of duty, is supported with the best authority in heaven or earth; and *the grace of God* issuing from this throne, 'teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' Mic. vi. 8. 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

6. Keep company with the loyal subjects of the King, and beware of associating yourselves, or saying *A confederacy* with rebels against the King's crown or government. 'My delight,' says David, 'is with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth.' But as for these who live in rebellion against the Lord, their  
company

company was a burden to him : ' Wo is me, that I  
' sojourn in Mesceh, that I dwell in the tents of Ke-  
' dar. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth  
' peace.'

7. Be sure to pay the tribute that is due to this throne ; do not withdraw from it its revenues. The King has imposed a tax of praise to be levied upon all his subjects ; and ' he who offereth praise, glorifieth  
' him.' O ' Praise is comely for the upright. This  
' people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth  
' my praise.' Do not with-hold this revenue, but let the high praises of a God of grace be continually in your mouth. And to engage us to a chearful paying of this tribute of praise, let us always remember the glorious liberties and privileges which we enjoy under the auspicious government and administration of grace ; which are so great and many, that ' eye hath not seen,  
' nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart  
' of man to conceive ;' which made the psalmist David to express himself, as we have it, Psal. xl. 5.  
' Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works  
' which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to  
' us ward : they cannot be reckoned up in order unto  
' thee : if I would declare and speak of them, they are  
' more than can be numbered.'

8. *Lastly*, Contend for the royalties and prerogatives of this throne, which are many ways invaded at this day. Attempts are made to rob the King of his equality with the Father, while they would strip him of his independency and self-existence. Others invade his government, by appointing ceremonies in his worship, which were never ordained in his word : others, by wresting the rights of his subjects from them, particularly in the free choice and election of their pastors ;



stors; others, by tolerating doctrines inconsistent with the eternal truths of his word. Now, I say, it is incumbent on all the loyal subjects of this King, to contend for the dignities of the crown, and the liberties of his kingdom, against all that do invade the same, following the exhortation of the apostle, Gal. v. 1. Let us 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' that we 'be not entangled again with' any 'yoke of bondage.'



The

The assurance of Faith opened and applied.

B E I N G

The substance of several SERMONS on Heb.

x. 22.

HEB. x. 19, 20. 21, 22.

*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, &c.*

C H A P. I.

*Containing an introduction to the main purpose, with the method of the following discourse.*

**T**H E S E verses contain the apostle's transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of the epistle. Having at great length discoursed upon the priestly office of Christ, in the foregoing part of the epistle, he sums up, in a few words, the scope and substance of all he had been saying, vers. 19, 20. 21. and then deduces a very natural inference from the whole, vers. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.* Like a wise builder, he first digs till he come to the foundation, and then calls himself and others to build upon it with confidence.

That

That we may have the more distinct view of the words, it is expedient that we observe in general, the apostle here very elegantly expresses New-Testament privileges, in an Old-Testament stile and dialect. The highest privilege of fallen man, is to have access into the presence of God, his offended Lord and Sovereign: the only way of access is Christ, of whom the temple of Solomon was an illustrious type. And with allusion unto that typical temple, Christ is presented to our faith under a threefold view, vers. 19, 20, 21.

1. As a *gate or door*, by which we may enter into the *holiest*, and that with *boldness*, by virtue of his atoning blood, vers. 19. Under the Mosaic dispensation, *Aaron alone*, and not the Israelites, could enter into the *holy of holies*, and that but *once a year*, with the blood of beasts sacrificed for himself and them. But now, under the New Testament, through the death and satisfaction of the Son of God, the way of access to friendship and fellowship with a holy God, both here and hereafter, is made open and patent to every sinner, who by faith comes in under the covert of the blood of Jesus. No sooner had Adam sinned, but the door of access to the majesty of God was bolted against him, and all his posterity; the cherubim with the flaming sword stood in his way. But now the flaming sword of justice being quenched in the blood of the surety, the door of access is again wide opened. I remember, the woman of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. in her parabolical address unto David, to persuade him to bring home his exile son, 'God (says she) doth devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.' This is remarkably true in the case in hand; God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised a way how

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his banished may be brought home again to his presence; and that is, through the blood and satisfaction of Christ, John x. 9. John xiv. 6.

2. To encourage us in our approaches to God through Christ, he is presented to us under the notion of 'a new and living way, consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh,' vers. 20. The inner vail, that separated between the holy place, and the holiest of all, in the temple of Jerusalem, was a type of that body of flesh assumed by the Son of God, whereby his Deity was veiled; and through the breaking or rending of this by his death on the cross, the way to God and glory becomes open and patent. And this is called a *new way*, either in opposition to Adam's way by a covenant of works, which is shut up ever since the fall of man; or because it never waxes old, but is ever fresh, green, and fragrant, unto the believing soul. And it is called a *living way*, because, though Christ was once dead, yet now he is alive, and lives for evermore, to give life to every soul that comes to God through him. And then, he is a way *consecrated for us*, he is dedicated for the use of sinners in their dealings with God: *For their sakes* (says he) *do I sanctify myself*. And O what can be more encouraging to a lost sinner, to make use of Christ by faith, than to know that he is just devoted for this work of saving that which was lost!

3. Whereas the sinner might object, That though the door be opened, and the new and living way consecrated; yet he is either so ignorant, that he knows not this way; or so impotent, that he cannot walk in it; or so guilty, that he dares not venture to go in to the holiest; therefore, to obviate all these, Christ is presented

presented to us as 'a great high priest over the house of God,' verſ. 21. O what noble encouragement is here for believing! Chriſt, as a high prieſt, 'is ordained for men in things pertaining to God,' Heb. v. 1. And ſeeing he is ordained for men, may not men make uſe of his mediation with confidence and boldneſs? Heb. iv. 14. 16. And then, by his office, he is obliged to execute the duties of his office toward every ſoul that employs him therein: he is obliged, as a high prieſt, to inſtruct the ignorant, to ſtrengthen the weak, to confirm the feeble, and 'to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people.' And therefore let us take courage to employ and improve him, eſpecially conſidering that he is both 'a merciful and faithful high prieſt,' Heb. ii. 17.; and alſo a *high prieſt* who is *over the houſe of God*; i. e. he has full power and authority from his eternal Father, to negotiate our affairs, and to render both our perſons and performances acceptable unto him. In a word, the whole management of the *offspring and iſſue*, and of all the *vessels of cups and flacons*, is committed to him; yea, 'all the glory of his Father's houſe hangs upon him, 'as upon a nail faſtened in a ſure place,' If. xxii. 24. And therefore, *ſeeing we have a high prieſt* of ſuch authority and intereſt, 'let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,' Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Whenever we have any buſineſs with God, whenever we would enter into the ſecret of his preſence, or enjoy fellowſhip with him, let us go in at the back of our great high prieſt, who has led the way before us, and is appearing in the preſence of God for us.

Now, I ſay, the apoſtle having thus preſented Chriſt under

under the most encouraging views, as the object of our faith, trust, and confidence, in our dealings with the Majesty of God, he proceeds to recommend and inculcate a correspondent duty in the words of my text, vers. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, having our hearts sprinkled, &c.*

Before we proceed to the more particular consideration of the words, it is very much worthy of our notice, to observe the apostle's order and method of doctrine, and how he knits the believer's privilege and duty together. He would have the privilege first believed, and then the duty performed: he would have us first believe, that 'the door of the holiest is opened' 'by the blood of Jesus,' that there is 'a new and living way consecrated for us,' that 'we have a high priest over the house of God,' ready to introduce us into his presence; and, upon these grounds of faith, he presses and inculcates the duty, *Let us draw near, &c.* It is pleasant hence to observe, how the method and order of the covenant of works is just inverted in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, duty was the foundation of our privilege; man was first to perform duty, and upon his doing of that, might expect the privilege in a way of pactional debt. But now, I say, the very reverse of this is God's order and method in the covenant of grace; for here we are first to believe the privilege, or to receive it as a grant of sovereign grace, and upon that ground we are to go on to duty. This is a thing that needs to be adverted to with the utmost attention, in regard the very bent of nature runs in the way of the covenant of works,



works, namely, to expect the privilege on the score of duty, and to fancy that God is a debtor to us, when we have done this and the other duty required in the law : whereas the stream of nature runs quite cross to the order and method laid in the covenant of grace, namely, first to receive the privilege in a way of grace, like beggars receiving God's alms ; and then to perform duty, as a testimony of gratitude for the privilege received, without expecting any thing from the Lord upon the account of duty done by us. This is what proud nature spurns against with the uttermost reluctancy. What ? To take all freely, *without money, and without price*, and to reckon ourselves unprofitable servants when we have done all, is what depraved nature cannot yield to, till the heart be new-moulded by sovereign and efficacious grace. ' Will ' the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ' ten thousands of rivers of oil ? ' &c. ' Wherefore ' have we fasted,' and prayed, ' and thou takest no ' knowledge ? ' is expressive of our natural way of thinking. But though this way lie cross unto nature, yet this is the way in which God will have sinners saved, or else they shall never share of his salvation : he will have them to receive eternal life begun here, and consummate hereafter, as ' the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' without regard to any of our doings as a foundation of our claim or title thereunto. Boasting must be for ever excluded, that the glory of our salvation may redound allennarly unto grace, which *reigns through imputed righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*. And therefore, I say, study to rivet upon your minds the order and method laid by God in the covenant of grace, where privilege received

ceived by faith is made the foundation of duty, and not duty the foundation of our claim to the privilege. This is the scheme or order laid in our Lesser Catechism, by the Westminster Assembly; where, in answer to the 3d question, we are told, that 'the scriptures principally teach,' first, 'what man is to believe concerning God, and' then, 'what duty God requires of man.' And, according to this order, we have, first, the objects of faith, and privileges of believers explained; and then, the duties of the moral law inculcate upon that ground. And if this order of doctrine be inverted, we destroy the covenant of grace, and return to a covenant of works. So much for the connection.

I proceed to the words themselves. Where we may notice, 1. The grand duty the apostle urges upon the foregoing grounds, *Let us draw near*. 2. He gives particular directions how we are to manage in our approaches unto God, through the new and living way, viz. 'With a true heart, in full assurance of faith,' &c.

As for the first, viz. the general duty that is pressed, *Let us draw near*. The apostle does not tell us expressly, whether, or to whom, we are to draw near; but it is plain from the whole drift of the text and context, that he invites us to draw near to God: not to God absolutely considered, for thus he is inaccessible by guilty sinners; but to 'God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.' This is that *throne of grace* to which he had invited us to 'come with boldness, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help

‘help in time of need,’ chap. iv. 16. The Greek word is the very same both there and here.

It is considerable, in the manner of the apostle’s exhortation, that, when he is calling others to draw near, he comprehends himself; it is not, ‘Do ye draw near,’ but, ‘Let us draw near.’ Ministers of the gospel, when dispensing the truths of God, must preach home to their own souls, as well as unto others. Sirs, we do not deliver truths or doctrines to you, wherein we ourselves have no manner of concern; no, our own souls are at the stake, and shall either perish or be saved eternally, as we receive or reject these precious truths which we deliver unto you. And truly, it can never be expected, that we will apply the truths of God with any warmth or liveliness unto others, unless we first make a warm application thereof to our own souls; and if we do not feed upon these doctrines, and practise these duties, which we deliver to, and inculcate upon you, though we preach unto others, we ourselves are but cast-aways.

The exhortation, *Draw near*, supposes our natural distance and estrangement from God: ‘All we like sheep have gone astray,’ says the prophet *Isaiah*, chap. liii. 6. When Christ would describe our apostate and lapsed state, he doth it under the notion of a ‘prodigal going into a far country,’ *Luke* xv. There are three things we all lost and forfeited in the first Adam, viz. the ‘image of God,’ the ‘favour of God,’ and ‘fellowship with God:’ yea, so much have we lost them, that the apostle plainly tells us, that we are *alienated from the very life of God* in our natural state. This God intimated unto Adam immediately after the fall, in that question he propounded

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ed to him, when hiding himself from his presence among the thickets of Paradise, 'Adam, where art thou?' Gen. iii. 9. *Non es ubi prius eras*, as Austin, one of the ancient fathers, glosseth it; 'Thou art not where thou wast before.' What is become of the late friendship and fellowship that was betwixt me and thee? Of a son of God, thou art become a child of the devil; of an ally of Heaven, turned a confederate of hell. Thus the breach and rupture is wide like the sea. Can ever parties betwixt whom there is such a natural and moral distance be brought together again? Yes; the apostle's exhortation to *draw near* plainly bears, that the offended and affronted Majesty of Heaven is accessible 'by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way.' It was the great plot of Heaven from eternity, to bring fallen man back again into fellowship with his Maker. Infinite wisdom, animated by infinite bowels of mercy, has found the way, and the way is CHRIST, John xiv. 6. The main intent of his incarnation, and of the whole of his mediatory work, was to *bring us to God*, 1 Pet. iii. 18. To bring strangers and enemies to amity and unity, is a great and mighty work; yet this work he accomplishes and brings about by the ransom he has paid for us, and by the operation of his Spirit in us.

This *drawing near to God*, it does not consist in any approach unto the essence of God; for, essentially considered, 'he is not far from every one of us: in him we live, and move, and have our being.' Neither does it lie in an external or bodily attendance upon him in the duties of his worship, 'Bodily exercise profiteth little:' many draw near to God with their mouths and lips, while their hearts are far removed

moved from him. Neither does it consist in a moral seriousness; though, alas! it is much to bring some people even that length. People may be morally serious about eternal concerns, in a legal way, like the Pharisee, who came to Christ, saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Yea, Heathens, and Mahometans, and Jews, may be morally serious in their own way, but they cannot be said to draw nigh to God. What is it then, say you, to *draw near to God*? I answer, It is an act of the heart or mind, whereby the soul, under the influence of the Spirit, sweetly and irresistibly returns to a God in Christ as its only centre of rest. The poor soul having tried Adam's way of access, and finding that door bolted by the law, justice, and holiness of God, despairs of ever entering thereby. At length the man, when he has wearied himself in the greatness of his way, finding the door of the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way being discovered to him in the light of the word and Spirit, he cries out at the sight of it, O! *this is the gate of God*, by this door will I enter into his presence; yea, 'this is my rest, here will I dwell, for I desire and like it well.' Oh what a sweet acquiescence of soul is there in God's device of salvation through Christ! The man cannot but applaud and approve of it, as a device every way worthy of infinite wisdom, crying out with the apostle, O! 'it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came in to the world to save sinners.' This ordinarily is the soul's exercise, both in its first and after approaches unto God, in any duty of worship. There is a constant improvement of the merit and mediation of Christ

Christ in every address the man makes to the Majesty of Heaven; he, as it were, fixes himself in the clefts of the Rock of ages; he gets into the secret places of that blessed stair, by which we ascend unto heaven; and then he shows his countenance, and lifts up his voice, in drawing near to God, by the new and living way. We, as it were, take up the propitiation which God has set forth, in the hand of faith, hold it up to God, saying, 'Behold the blood of the covenant: Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.' We go quite out of ourselves, when we draw near to the holiest by the blood of Jesus; we overlook our own duties, graces, frames, attainments, grounding our hope of access and success only upon the merit and moyen of our great high priest, God having 'made us accepted in the beloved.' And, in this view of things, the soul will readily express itself, as David did in the like case, saying, 'I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.' And if God hide his face, the soul will wait, and bode good at his hand, saying, 'Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him: He will command his loving kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me.' And if the Lord smile, and grant an answer of peace, he will not ascribe his success to his own faith, frame, fervency, but unto Christ alone, saying, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name' be the 'glory.' Thus much for the main duty, of *drawing near*.

The apostle next proceeds to direct as to the manner of our approach. And,

*First*, He directs us to draw near *with a true heart*. This is a word fitly spoken. If he had required us to



draw near with a heart perfectly clean and pure, he might as well have bidden us fly without wings; but he bids us draw near with a *true heart*, i. e. with a heart truly concerned about acceptance with God, a heart truly approving of, and acquiescing in the new and living way. In short, a true heart here, is opposed to a double, doubting, distrusting, and hypocritical heart. All dissimulation is to be avoided in our dealings with him, who 'trieth the hearts and reins,' and 'whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching Jerusalem as with candles.' Psal. li. 6. 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.' Whereas the hypocrite, who draws near with his mouth, and honours God with his lips, while his heart is far removed from him, shall not stand in his presence. Take care then that your hearts be honestly minded toward God when you draw nigh to him. But I pass this also, and go on to that which I have principally in view, *viz.*

The *second* direction or advice the apostle gives, in order to our successful approach unto God by the new and living way, and that is, to draw near *IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH*. The original word signifies to be *fully persuaded*, or *assured* of a thing; and is opposed to *wavering*, *doubting*, and *uncertainty*. The apostle having laid a firm foundation of access in the preceding verses, he bids us trust to it, and rest upon it, with an unshaken confidence, and certain persuasion of success. What further is necessary by way of explication, will occur in the prosecution of the following doctrine.

DOCT. *It is the will of God, that they who approach*  
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*to him in Christ, shall draw near in full assurance of faith, or with a certain persuasion, and confident expectation of success.*

The foundation of this doctrine is obvious. It is plain the apostle here is not speaking of that assurance of grace and salvation which follows upon believing, and is the result of the soul's reflection upon the operations of the Holy Spirit within; but of an assurance lying in the very direct act of faith: for the apostle's scope here is, not to give the marks and evidences, but to present the object of faith, *viz.* Christ as the *door* and *way* to the *holiest*, and as a *high priest* ready to introduce us; and thereupon exhorts to a correspondent act of believing, in drawing near to God, namely, *with full assurance of faith.*

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance, endeavour to speak,

- I. Of *faith* in general.
- II. Of the *assurance* of faith.
- III. Of the *full assurance* of faith.
- IV. Of the *grounds* that faith builds its assurance upon, in drawing near to God.
- V. Apply the whole.

## C H A P. II.

### *Of FAITH in general.*

**B**Efore I go on to discourse these heads, I shall only premise, that the practical and experimental understanding of this subject, is a matter of the

highest importance and concern, in regard, as the apostle tells us expressly, Heb. xi. 6. 'Without faith 'it is impossible to please God.' Without some degree of faith, we can never make a successful approach unto a throne of grace. What was said of the Israelites with relation to the earthly Canaan, that 'they 'could not enter in because of unbelief,' the same may be said of the greatest part of professors under the gospel, they *cannot enter* into the holiest of fellowship with God here, or of immediate enjoyment hereafter, *because of unbelief*. And therefore, I say, the right understanding and uptaking of this subject must be of the greatest concern to them, who have any concernment their acceptance with God. This premised, I proceed to,

I. The *first* thing proposed in the method, which was, to discourse a little of FAITH in general. I shall not stand upon the different kinds of faith that are commonly mentioned, such as, a *historical, miraculous, and temporary* faith, which may be found in reprobates and temporary believers: our inquiry at present is particularly anent *the faith of God's elect*, which is well described in our Shorter Catechism, thus:

'Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby  
'we receive and rest upon him alone, for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.'

For clearing of which description, I offer the few following considerations.

1. That faith is a *saving grace*. And it is so designed, because it is *the free gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. It is not the product of free-will; such a flower never sprung out of the soil of depraved nature; no, it is  
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one of the prime operations of the Spirit, in effectual calling, upon the souls of God's elect. It is not bestowed upon any upon the account of good dispositions or qualifications antecedent to itself; faith is the first grace, or the first act of spiritual life, and, as it were, the parent of the other graces, because it roots and grafts the soul in Christ, of whom alone our fruit is found. Before the implantation of faith, nothing but Atheism, enmity, ignorance, and unbelief, overspreads the face of the soul, 'being alienated from the' very 'life of God, through the ignorance that is in us.' And therefore, faith must needs be a *grace*, or *free gift of God*, bestowed without any antecedent merit, good disposition, or qualification in us. Faith is a *saving* grace; because where-ever true faith is, there salvation is already begun, and shall certainly be consummate in due time. There is an inseparable connection stated, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation: John iii. 16. 'God so loved the 'world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have 'everlasting life.' Mark xvi. 16. 'He that believeth, 'shall be saved.' When we preach the everlasting gospel, making offer of Christ and his salvation unto every creature, we are at the same time to declare, that whosoever he be that gives faith's entertainment unto this gospel of the grace of God, shall be saved. So that this promise, establishing the connection between faith and salvation, is as extensive as the offer of the gospel, and is not made to believers exclusively of others. It is certainly true of every son of Adam, lying within the joyful sound of a Saviour, that if he believe, he shall be saved. And this we are allowed

to declare in the name of God, as an encouragement to every sinner to receive and entertain our message.

2. I remark from this description of faith, that it hath Christ for its main and principal object; for it is a faith in *Jesus Christ*. There is such a sibness betwixt Christ and faith, that they cannot be separate. Take away Christ from faith, then faith is but a cipher, and stands for nothing; nothing can fill the eye or hand of faith, but Christ only. Christ is the *bread of life*, faith is the *mouth* of the soul that eats and feeds upon him: Christ is the mystical *brazen serpent*, faith the *eye* of the soul that looks to him for healing: Christ is the *strong-hold* cast open to the prisoners of hope, faith the *foot* of the soul that runs in to him for shelter: Christ is our living *altar*, his satisfaction and intercession like the two horns of the altar, and faith *flees* in thither for safety from the law and justice of God, which pursue the sinner for his life: Christ is the *bridegroom*, and faith, like the *bride*, takes him by the hand, saying, 'Even so I take him.' In a word, faith flights and overlooks every thing else to be at Christ, saying with David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' and with Paul, 'I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.'

3. I remark, that faith is here described to be a *receiving of Christ*, according to what we have, John i. 12. 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,' &c. For understanding this, you would know, that Christ, the ever-blessed

bleſſed object of faith, is preſented to us in the goſpel under a great many different views and aſpects, in a correſpondence unto which faith receives its denomination. For inſtance, Is Chriſt preſented under the notion of *meat* to the hungry ſoul? then faith is expreſſed by *eating*. Is Chriſt held out under the notion of *living waters*? then faith is called a *drinking*. Is he held out as a *refuge*? then faith is called a *fleeing* to him, Heb. vi. 18. Is he held out as a *garment* to the naked? then faith is a *putting him on* for clothing. Thus, I ſay, according to the aſpect in which Chriſt is preſented, faith receives its name; as the ſea receives its names according to the different countries or ſhores it waſhes. Juſt ſo here, when Chriſt is preſented under the notion of a *gift*, then faith is called a *receiving* him; for giving and receiving are correlates, as you ſee, John iii. 27. *A man can receive* (or, as in the margin, *take unto himſelf*) *nothing, except it be given him from heaven* \* Receiving, or taking of a thing, is but ſtealth or robbery, where it is not warranted by an antecedent giving or granting: ſo our receiving Chriſt would be but preſumption, and a vicious intromiſſion, if he were not given of God to be received. And this giving of Chriſt in the revelation and offer of the goſpel, is common to all, and warrants all to receive him. John vi. 32. ſays Chriſt unto a promiſcuous multitude, the far greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from Chriſt's character of them, 'My Father (ſays he)

\* When Chriſt is received by us, he muſt be tendered, given, granted, or communicated unto us. *Owen on the glory of Chriſt, p. 123.*



‘giveth you the true bread from heaven,’ meaning himself. We read, Psal. cxv. 16. that ‘God hath given the earth to the sons of men,’ *i. e.* he made a grant of it unto them, to be used and possessed by them; and by virtue of this deed of gift or grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, or stocked with inhabitants, it was lawful for a man to take possession of it, and use it as his own. Just so here, *God hath so loved the world of lost mankind, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that whosoever of mankind lost believeth in him, or receiveth him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,* John iii. 16. This will not infer an *universal redemption*: for I do not now speak of the purchase or application of redemption, which, without all doubt, is peculiar to the elect; but of that giving of Christ in the word, which warrants our receiving of him. And this, past all peradventure, is common to the whole visible church, yea, to all to whom the revelation of Christ comes; for if there were not such a giving of Christ as warrants all to receive him, the unbelieving world could not in justice be condemned for rejecting him. O then ‘let mount Zion rejoice,’ and ‘let the daughters of Judah (I mean, the visible church) ‘be glad,’ and receive it as ‘a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,’ that ‘unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace:’ for these are ‘good tidings of great joy to all people,’ Is. ix. 6. Luke ii. 10. Receive this Saviour who is given to you; and receive him with gratitude and praise, warbling out that doxology with heart and lip, ‘Thanks be unto God for his  
‘unspeakable

‘unspeakable gift.’ And if you do not, remember I tell you, you will follow after lying vanities, and slight your own mercy.

4. Upon this description of faith, I remark, that faith is called not only a receiving, but a *resting* upon Christ: Psal. xxxvii. 7. ‘Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.’ We are not, in my opinion, to think, that receiving is one act of faith, and resting another act of it; they are only different expressions of the same applicatory, justifying faith, or (as some will have it) the rest of faith is a continuation of the reception. There are a great many denominations of faith, of the same divine authority with these two mentioned in the answer of the Catechism, such as, eating, drinking, fleeing, entering, coming, trusting, &c. But these are not different acts, but only different expressions of the saving act of faith, making use of, or applying Christ in a suitableness unto the view wherein he is presented in the word of God. Now, as to this expression of *resting*, it leads us to conceive of Christ as a *rock* or a strong *foundation*, upon which we may, and still ought to lay the weight of our everlasting concerns, with the greatest confidence. When we lay our weight upon a rock, we are not afraid that the rock sink or fail underneath us: so, in believing, the poor, weary, burdened soul, finding itself unable to stand upon its own legs, leans and rests upon this Rock of ages, being confident that this Rock will not fail. Or the expression of *resting* may allude unto a man’s resting upon a charter for an estate, a bond or bill for a sum of money; he rests upon it as good and sufficient security: so the soul, in believing, rests upon the fidelity and veracity of a God in Christ, pawn-

ed in the covenant of grace, and promises thereof. He looks upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and Spirit treasured up in Christ, as they are laid out in the word of faith, saying, with David, 'This is all my salvation, and all my desire.' On which account, faith, Heb. xi. 1. is called 'the substance of things hoped for;' because it rejoices in the promise, as though it had the thing promised. This *resting* is equivalent unto *trusting*, as is evident from all these scriptures cited in the Catechism upon this head. I shall notice further, before I leave this point, that both these expressions of *receiving* and *resting*, whereby faith is here described, do, in the very nature of the thing intended, carry an application and appropriation in them: for when I receive a gift, I take it as my own property; and when I rest upon a charter or bond, I rest on it as my security: and if this be not allowed, the relieving and supporting nature of faith is in a great measure lost; without it we could never be 'filled with joy and peace in believing.' I shall only add, that both these expressions, pointing out the nature of faith, do so describe it as to put it out of the rank or category of *works*; for when a poor man receives his alms, or when a weary man rests him, he cannot in any propriety of speech be said to *work*. God will have man saved, under the new covenant, by such a mean and instrument, that so works and boasting may be for ever excluded, and grace alone for ever exalted.

5. I remark, that faith receives Christ, and rests upon him alone. The poor soul, before the saving revelation of Christ, was grasping at empty shadows, trusting in lying refuges; and, like the men of the old



old world, when the waters of the deluge were upon the increase, was running to this and the other mountain, where he might be safe from the swelling deluge of God's wrath; but finding the waters to overflow his hiding-places, he quits them, and flees to the Rock of ages, saying, 'In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: in the Lord only is the salvation of his people. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby to be saved, but the name of Jesus.' Every man by nature being married to the law in Adam, is attempting to climb up to heaven upon the broken ladder of the covenant of works, and to pass the deluge of God's wrath by the fallen bridge of the law. But, as sure as the Lord lives, your attempts this way will fail you; for 'by the works of the law, no flesh living shall be justified.' God has established a bridge of communication between heaven and earth, by the obedience, death, and intercession of his eternal Son; and every other passage to heaven but this, is stopped by the justice and holiness of God. John xiv. 6. says Christ there, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'

6. Faith receives Christ, and rests upon him alone *for salvation*. This points at the end the sinner has before him, in his first closing with Christ; he flees unto him for salvation: Acts xv. 11. 'We believe, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.' By *salvation* here, we are not simply to understand an eternity of happiness in the enjoyment of God after-time, but a salvation begun in this present life; salvation from the beginning of it in rege-

neration, till it be consummate in glory. The soul, in believing, rests upon Christ for pardon, which is salvation from the guilt of sin, and condemnatory sentence of the law: it rests on him for sanctification, which is a salvation from the filth and power of sin; for glorification, which is a salvation from the very inbeing of sin. Alas! the greatest part of the visible church have no other notion of Christ, but only as a Saviour to keep them out of hell, and to deliver them from vindictive wrath. It is true indeed, our Jesus saveth from the wrath that is to come. But how does he that? He does it by saving from sin in the first place: 'His name (saith the angel) shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.' His first and great business was to *condemn sin*, that arch-traitor, and first-born of the devil, Rom. viii. 3. *to finish transgressions, and make an end of sin*. And therefore it is a salvation from sin, in the guilt, and filth, and power of it, for which faith receives Christ, and rests upon him.

7. I remark, that faith receives and rests upon Christ, *as he is offered to us in the gospel*. This *offer* of Christ, though it be last named in this description of faith, yet it is the first thing, in the order of nature, that faith believes: for unless one believe that Christ is offered to him in particular, as the gift of God, and as a foundation of hope and help, he will never receive him, or rest on him for salvation. This is a believing in order to believing; a believing that Christ, and salvation in him, is really offered, in order to his being accepted and received. And therefore, be verily persuaded, that Christ is *yours* in the *offer*, and 'that God hath given to you eternal life in  
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‘ his Son ; ‘ for ‘ this is the record of God,’ 1 John v. 11. And unless you believe this, you ‘ make ‘ God a liar, because you believe not the record that ‘ God hath given of his Son,’ verse 10. O Sirs, believe it, that ‘ unto you a child is born, unto you a ‘ son is given, whose name is called Wonderful,’ &c. ; and that God hath given him to a lost world, in the gospel offer and revelation, that ‘ whosoever ‘ believeth in him, should not perish, but have ever- ‘ lasting life,’ John iii. 16.

Next, You may observe, that it is ‘ in the gospel’ that this offer is made, and this gift of God is presented unto you. What is the gospel, but a word of grace, a word of promise, a word of faith, a word of life and salvation ? and ‘ to you is the word of this ‘ salvation sent.’ And in this word, Christ and his everlasting righteousness, and all-sufficient fulness, is brought near to you, in order to your receiving and applying him to your own souls by faith. You need not climb up to heaven, or dig into hell, in quest of a Saviour ; for ‘ the word is nigh thee,’ (and Christ in the word), ‘ even the word of faith which we preach,’ Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, 9. As a sum of money is brought nigh to a man in a bond that is offered him, so is Christ brought nigh in the word of promise to us, ‘ Acts ii. 39. ‘ The promise is unto you,’ &c. And without this word of grace and promise, believing were a thing impossible, in regard faith could never fasten on Christ, or on God in him, without this word of faith. If I should bid you believe that such a man will give you a sum of money, you would think me ridiculous, unless he had given his word that he would do it ; your faith or trust could not  
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fasten upon him without his word or writ as the immediate ground thereof: so here, our faith, trust, or confidence, could never find a foundation without God's word of grace and promise; and in receiving his word you receive himself, and all the treasures of his grace laid up in Christ, and laid out to your hand in the word.

Next, It is considerable in this branch of the description, that faith's reception and application of Christ must be regulated by, and bear a proportion unto the offer that is made of him in the gospel; for here we are told, that faith is a receiving and resting upon him as he is offered, &c. This qualifies our reception of Christ, and distinguishes the faith of true believers, from that of hypocrites and formalists. And therefore notice this as a thing of the last moment and consequence, whether your faith comes up to the offer and corresponds thereunto. I shall illustrate this in the four following particulars.

1<sup>st</sup>, Christ is freely offered in the gospel: Is. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' Rev xxii. 17.—'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' So faith receives and embraces him as the free gift of God. Beware of thinking to buy the pearl with the money and price of your works, duties, and good qualifications; as if by these you were fitted for receiving Christ, or as if God made you the more welcome on the account of these, to receive his unspeakable gift: no, no, remember that, in the matter of believing, you are to shake your hands from holding of such bribes;

bribes; for the pearl of great price cannot be bought in such a way. It is true, believing is called a *buying*, If. lv. 1. Rev. iii. 18. But then let it be remembered what sort of a buying it is; it is a buying 'without money, and without price' God's price in the market of the gospel is just nothing: and yet this is so great a matter with man, that the pride of his heart will not allow him to tell it down. We cannot think of coming up, I should rather say, we cannot think of coming down to God's price; I mean, of taking Christ and salvation in him and through him for nothing. Many say to God as Abram said to the king of Sodom, Gen. xiv. 23. 'I will not take any thing that is thine, from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich.' Just so does the proud self-righteous sinner upon the matter say unto God. God comes in a gospel-dispensation, saying, Come sinners, I see you are 'wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked:' you have nothing to give me as an equivalent for life, righteousness, and salvation; and therefore I seek no money or price from you, but make a free gift of my Son, and his whole fulness, for nothing: only take him as my free gift, and he and all that comes along with him is your own for ever. No, says the pride of the heart, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, I stand in need of nothing' at God's hand: if God will give me life upon the terms of the first covenant, as it was granted to Adam; or if (because I am already a sinner, and incapable of yielding a sinless and perfect obedience) God will lower the terms of the covenant of works, and grant me an interest in Christ and salvation for my act of believing, or on the score  
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of my honest aims and good meanings, or sincere endeavours, I am well content. But to take Christ and eternal life for nothing, is what the proud legal heart cannot stoop to. O what a cursed aversion is there in the heart of man against his being a debtor unto grace, and grace only! To 'buy without money, and without price,' is a mystery the selfish heart of man cannot comprehend. But, Sirs, faith is a grace that comes to get, and not to give; or if it give any thing, it is the ills of the soul, but nothing of good does it pretend to give. The sinner, in believing, upon the matter says, Lord, I give thee my folly, and take thee for my only wisdom; I give thee my guilt, that thou may be 'the Lord my righteousness;' I give thee my defilements, and take thee for sanctification; I give thee my chains and fetters, that I may be indebted to thee for redemption and liberty; I give thee my poverty, and take thee for my only riches; I give thee my wicked, wandering, hard, and deceitful heart, that thou mayst give me the new heart and new spirit promised in thy covenant. Thus, I say, Christ is freely offered, and must be freely received.

And, Christ is offered wholly, an undivided Christ is offered, and thus also he must be received. There are some who, in their professed and pretended way of believing, do as it were halve and divide Christ. Some do so far receive him as a prophet, that they submit to the teaching of his word, and thereby come to acquire a great deal of speculative knowledge in the things of God; but, being unacquainted with the teaching of his Spirit, they never come to the knowledge of the truth 'as it is in Jesus.' And hence it comes



comes that they never flee to him as a propitiation, or submit unto his authority as a king and law-giver : for the execution of the prophetic office, paves the way for his reception both as a priest and king. Some again professedly receive Christ as a priest, to save them from hell and the curse ; but, by continuing in their ignorance under a gospel revelation, and walking according to the course of this world, and not according to the laws of Christ, they do evidently reject him, both as a prophet and a king. Others again, and I fear too many in our day, do professedly receive Christ as a king and law-giver, to the prejudice of his priestly office, while they imagine, by their obedience to his law, particularly the new gospel-law of faith and repentance, (as some call it), to purchase a title of salvation ; by which means they either totally exclude the righteousness of Christ, or mingle in their own acts of faith and repentance with the righteousness of Christ in the affair of acceptance and justification before : in both which cases, ' Christ ' can profit them nothing ; they are fallen from grace,' as the apostle expressly declares, Gal. v. 2, 4. Thus, I say, many pretended believers halve and divide the offices of Christ. But ' is Christ divided ? ' No ; a whole, an entire and undivided Christ must be received, or no Christ at all ; there is nothing of Christ that a believing soul can want. It is true indeed, the first flight of a poor awakened soul, fleeing from the face of the law and justice of God, is to Christ as a priest ; because here, and here only, it finds relief and shelter under the covert of everlasting righteousness. But at the same moment in which it receives him as a priest for justification, it submits unto his  
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kingly authority, saying, as the men of Israel did unto Gideon, 'Rule thou over us:—for thou hast delivered us out of the hands of our enemies. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we now make mention of thy name.'

3dly, Christ is offered particularly unto every one of the hearers of the gospel; and accordingly faith receives him with particular application. The general call and offer reaches every individual person, and God speaks to every sinner as particularly, as though he named him by his name and surname: Remission of sin is preached to you; we beseech you to be reconciled; the promise is unto you. And, for my part, I do not know what sort of a gospel men make, who do not admit this. Now, I say, faith, which is the echo of the gospel offer and call, must needs receive an offered Christ and salvation, with particular application to the soul itself. For a person to rest in a general persuasion that Christ is offered to the church, or offered to the elect, or a persuasion of God's ability and readiness to save all that come to Christ, is still but a general faith, and what devils, reprobates, and hypocrites may have. Man, woman, Christ stands at thy door, thou in particular, even thou art called and commanded to believe in the name of the Son of God. Here lies the great pinch and strait of believing: the convinced and awakened soul, through the policy of Satan, and the workings of a deceitful heart, thrusts away the word of grace and faith, as not pertaining unto it; till God, by the power of his Spirit, irradiate the word, and irradiate the mind of the sinner, letting the man see that to him the word

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of this salvation is sent: and then he believes with particular application, not only good-will to man upon earth, but good will to me; Christ is offered to me, and therefore I take him for my own Saviour; the promise and covenant is directed unto me, and therefore I embrace it as my security. But, perhaps, more of this under the second general head.

*4thly*, God is hearty, and in good earnest, in his offers of Christ, and his salvation. O Sirs! do not think that a God of truth dissembles with you, when he makes offer of his unspeakable gift, or that he offers a thing to you which he has no mind to give. He says, yea, he swears with the greatest solemnity, by his very life, that he is in good earnest, and has no pleasure in your death. And after this, to think that he is not in earnest, what else is it, but to charge a God of truth with lying and perjury? There cannot be a greater affront offered to a man of common veracity. How criminal then must it be to impute such a thing to him, for whom it is impossible to lie, and who hates all fraud and dissimulation in others with a perfect hatred? Thus, I say, God is in good earnest in his offers of Christ; so faith is hearty, and in good earnest in receiving and applying him: 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness' God's whole heart and his whole soul is in the offer and promise of the gospel, Jer. xxxii. 41.; and is it not reasonable that we should give him a meeting, by believing with the whole heart and soul? It is not one faculty, but all the powers of the soul do jointly concur in this business of believing; though indeed, to speak accurately, with the learned and judicious Dr. Owen, "Faith is in the understanding in respect of its



its being and subsistence, in the will and heart in respect of its effectual operation." This much shall serve for the *first* thing proposed, namely, some account of the nature of *faith* in general.

### C H A P. III.

#### *Of the ASSURANCE of faith.*

II. **T**HE *second* thing in the method was, to speak a little of *the ASSURANCE of faith*. And what I have to offer upon this head, I shall endeavour to reduce under these five propositions following.

*Proposition 1.* is this, That in this faith (which I have been describing) there is a twofold certainty or assurance, viz. of assent and application. The former necessarily supposes an assurance of understanding, or of knowledge, Col. ii. 2. The apostle there speaks of 'the full assurance of understanding,' which every Christian ought to breathe after, and which every believer hath in a greater or lesser measure; for it is only 'they that know his name' that 'will put their trust in him,' Psal. ix. 10. This assurance of understanding, as I take it, lies in an uptaking of the reality and excellency of things divine and supernatural: there is a beam of the glorious Sun of righteousness darted in upon the man's soul, who before was sitting in darkness, and in the regions of the shadow of death; whereby he that was darkness in the abstract, becomes 'light in the Lord.' — He comes now to see things spiritual in another light than formerly; he enters, as

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it were, into a new world of wonders: upon which account we are said to be 'called out of darkness into God's marvellous light.' Perhaps the man had, before this, some dreaming, floating, superficial notions of these things; he heard of them by the hearing of the ear: but now his eyes see them; and he sees as great a reality in things invisible and eternal, as though he saw them with his bodily eyes. This is called by the apostle, Heb. xi. 1. 'the evidence of things not seen.' There is such a certainty here, as amounts to a demonstration; so that you may as soon persuade a man that it is midnight, when the mid-day sun is shining upon him in full splendor, as persuade a man in the lively exercise of faith, that there is not a reality and excellency in things supernaturally revealed. This is so essential to faith, that very commonly under the Old Testament, and frequently also under the New, faith receives its denomination therefrom, Is. liii. 11. Jer. xxxi. 34. John xvii. 3.

But, to come a little more close to the purpose in hand, *1<sup>st</sup>*, There is, I say, in faith an assurance of assent, whereby the man assuredly believes whatever God has said in his word to be true; and that not upon the testimony of men, of ministers, or angels, but upon the testimony and authority of the God of truth, for whom it is impossible to lie, speaking in his own word, and saying, 'Thus saith the Lord.' But in a particular manner the soul gives its assent unto the truth of the promises of the gospel, and the revelation of the word, concerning the person, natures, offices, undertakings, and performances of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, Surety, and Saviour

viour of lost sinners. The man's understanding being enlightened with the knowledge of Christ, and having got a view of him by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, he finds it to be all true that God has said of Christ in the word; so that he cannot shun in this case to join issue with the apostle, 'This is' indeed 'a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into 'the world to save sinners,' 1 Tim. i. 15. He sees the truth and veracity of God so much engaged in the covenant and promises thereof, that they are more firm than the everlasting mountains, and perpetual hills, Is. liv. 10. Now, this certainty of assent is, in scripture dialect, called a 'believing the report of 'the gospel,' Is. liii. 1.; a 'receiving the record of 'God,' 1 John v. 10. 11.; a 'setting to the seal, 'that God is true,' John iii. 33.

2dly, There is in faith an assurance of application, or appropriation, expressed frequently in scripture by a resting, a trusting, or confiding in the Lord, and the veracity of his word of grace and promise. By this act of faith, the soul takes home the promise, and embraces it as a good and sufficient security to itself. It is said of the Old-Testament worthies, Heb. xi. 13. that they were 'persuaded of the promises, and embraced them.' Their faith in the promise was a persuasion, or assent with appropriation thereof to their own souls, insomuch that they looked upon the promise as their substance: and hence is that which we have in the 1st verse of that chapter, 'Faith is the 'substance of things hoped for.' This applicatory act of faith, wherein the very life, soul, and sweetness of faith lies, is pleasantly expressed and illustrated in David. God had made a promise to him of the

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crown and kingdom of Israel, which bore up his spirits, when through the rage and fury of Saul, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; and viewing the promise, and the fidelity of the promiser, he cries out, Psal. lx. 6. 'God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice:' and because I have the security of his promise, I dare say it with confidence and assurance, 'Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.' In like manner, true faith, it appropriates the mercy of God in Christ to the soul itself in particular, upon the ground of the free and faithful promise of God. I might here demonstrate, that the stream of our best Protestant divines concur in their sentiments as to this matter: I shall only at present quote the definition of faith given by the great and judicious Dr. Owen, in his Catechism, or Principles of the Doctrine of Christ; where, having moved the question, "What is justifying faith?" His answer is, "A gracious resting on the free promises of God in Christ Jesus for mercy, with a firm persuasion of heart, that God is a reconciled Father to us in the Son of his love." For proof of which he cites, 1 Tim. i. 16. John xiii. 15. John xix. 25. Rom. iv. 5. Heb. iv. 16. Rom. viii. 38, 39. Gal. ii. 20. 2 Cor. v. 20, 21. And on the margin he has these words, "Of this faith the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause, the word the instrumental, the law indirectly, by discovering our misery, the gospel immediately, by holding forth a Saviour. Faith (adds he) is in the understanding in respect of its being and subsistence, in the will and heart in respect of its effectual working." According to this account of faith, this assurance I speak of, viz. a persuasion of the promise with appropriation,

appropriation, (as the judicious Calvin speaks), can no more be separate from faith, than light can be separate from the sun. It takes home the grace and mercy of God to the soul in particular, which before lay in common in the offer of the gospel. And without this particular application, the offer and promise of the gospel can stand us in no stead; but is like a price put in the hand of a fool, who has no heart to it. Our meat set before us will never feed us, unless it be applied by eating it; so 'except we eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man,' by an applying faith, 'we have no life in us.' Whatever excellency there be in Gilead's balm, it will never recover the hurt of the daughter of Zion, unless it be used by faith. Faith answers and corresponds unto the word of faith, as the seal and the wax answer to one another, Zech. xiii. 9. 'I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' Faith will not quit its *my's*, though all the world should say against it. The marrow of the gospel (as Luther observes) is in these pronouns, *MEUM*, *NOSTRUM*, *my* and *our*. He bids us read these with great emphasis. *Tolle meum, & tolle Deum*, says another, "Take away property, and you take away God, take away Christ." It is the common dialect of faith in scripture, to vent itself in words of appropriation; it has a peculiar pleasure and satisfaction in these words, *my* and *our*, and rolls them in its mouth like a sweet morsel. See how sweetly David harps upon this string, Psal. xviii. 1, 2. no less than eight times in a breath does he repeat his appropriating *my*, 'My strength, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my buckler, the horn of my

‘ my salvation, and my high tower.’ Yea, so tenacious is faith in this matter, that it will maintain its *my’s* in the face of a hiding and frowning God: Psal. xxii. 1. ‘ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ *My* is a word of faith, says Flavel on the text. So Is. xlix. 14. ‘ Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.’ But I need not stand to offer more instances of this kind, seeing, as one observes, faith in scripture expresses itself by these two words, *my* and *our*, no less than about three hundred times.

Thus you see what kind of assurance there is in faith, namely, an assurance or certainty of assent and application. The first may be found in a great measure, and in some sort, in devils and reprobates: the last is of a distinguishing nature, and peculiar only to the faith of God’s elect, and of his operation; though indeed some shadow of it also may be found in the presumptuous faith of hypocrites; of which we may speak afterward. Knowledge and assent are preparatory toward that application, wherein the very soul of saving and justifying faith doth lie. And when we speak of them one after another, it is not as if they were really separate in the soul’s exercise; for I take them up as one complex undivided act of the soul. In the very first view and revelation of Christ by the word and Spirit, the soul cannot shun to cry out with Thomas, ‘ My Lord, and my God.’ I do not mean that the soul always, in the first moment of believing, runs that length, as to express itself so with the mouth, but I mean, this is what faith would say, could it get up its head from under the load of unbelief and indwelling corruption, wherewith it is overpowered.



*Proposition 2.* I offer, is this, That there is a great difference betwixt the assurance of faith, (which I have now described), and the assurance of sense, which follows upon faith. The assurance of faith is a direct, but the assurance of sense is a reflex act of the soul. The assurance of faith hath its object and foundation from without, but that of sense has them within. The object of the assurance of faith is a 'Christ revealed, 'promised, and offered in the word;' the object of the assurance of sense is a 'Christ formed within us 'by the Holy Spirit.' The assurance of faith is the cause, that of sense is the effect; the first is the root, and the other is the fruit. The assurance of faith eyes the promise in its stability, flowing from the veracity of the promiser; the assurance of sense it eyes the promise in its actual accomplishment. By the assurance of faith, Abraham believed that he should have a son in his old age, because God who cannot lie had promised; but by the assurance of sense, he believed it when he got Isaac in his arms. By the first, Noah was sure that he and his family should not perish in the waters of the deluge; but by the last, he was assured of it, when the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat, and the waters were withdrawn again into their proper channels. By the former, the believing Israelites were assured, that Canaan should be their possession, because God had made a grant and a deed of gift of it to them in his promise; by the latter they were assured of it, when they passed Jordan, overthrew the old inhabitants, and divided the good land by lot, as the inheritance of the tribes of Israel. Time would fail me, to illustrate this matter by instances that stand upon record in the sacred oracles.

oracles. Faith asserts its interest in a future good, because promised; sense asserts its interest in a present good, because possessed. Faith says, 'My God will hear me;' sense says, "My God hath heard me." Faith says, 'He will bring me forth to the light; and I shall behold his righteousness;' sense says, "He hath brought me forth to the light, and I do behold his righteousness." Again, faith is conversant about things that are 'not seen,' and 'hoped for;' sense is conversant about things seen, and actually enjoyed. Faith says, "He is my God, because he has said in the covenant, I will be their God;" sense again says, "He is my God, because I know my soul has said unto the Lord, He is my Lord." Faith assures the soul of the remission of sins in the blood of the Lamb, because God has said, 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;' sense again assures the soul of remission, because of the intimations of pardon in some sensible smiles of the Lord's countenance, and some saving operations of his grace. By faith I believe my salvation, because it is purchased, promised, and possessed by my glorious head Christ Jesus: but by sense I believe my salvation, because I find this salvation already begun in a work of regeneration, and advancing in a work of sanctification, 'being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun the good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

*Proposition 3.* The assurance of faith will stand its ground, when the assurance of sense is quite lost and gone. A clear instance of this we have in Christ, when there was a total eclipse of sensible manifestations, yea, nothing but a lowering cloud of vindictive

wrath surrounding and breaking upon him as our surety; yet, at that same time, the assurance of faith maintains the claim, and repeats it, saying, 'My God, my God;' upon the ground not only of his eternal Sonship, but of the promise the Father had made to him, Psal. lxxxix. 26. 'He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.' And lest you should think this was a thing peculiar unto the head, see an instance of it also in the church, which is his body, Is. xlix. 14. 'Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' Upon which the holy Rutherford sweetly glosses to this purpose: "He may be a forgetting and withdrawing God to my feeling; and yet to my faith, MY GOD, and MY LORD: even as the wife may believe the angry and forsaking husband is still her husband." Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. is so far, deserted as to sensible presence, that he is as to his own feeling, 'laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps,' verse 6. Yea, verse 7. he adds, 'Thy wrath lieth hard upon me; and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.' And, verses 15, 16, 17. 'While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together.' What lower could a child of God be brought, on this side of hell? and yet faith, amidst all these clouds, steps in with its appropriating *my*, verse 1. 'O Lord God of my salvation.' And truly, if there were not some exhilarating certainty in faith, acting upon the unalterable covenant in such cloudy and dismal dispensations, I know not what could keep the believer from running  
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into utter despair. But the grace of faith will venture the soul's safety upon the strong plank of the promise, even when sensible consolations are quite dashed to pieces, by the angry billows of outward and inward trouble, like two seas, meeting upon the believer. David had the experience of this, Psal. xxvii. 13. 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' Hence also it is, that the Lord directs his people to the exercise of faith in such a case, Is. l. 10. 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.'

*Proposition 4.* When we speak of the assurance of faith, it is not to be so understood, as if every one that has faith were perfectly free of doubting. This, I apprehend, is what scares many at this doctrine of the assurance of faith. They think, that if there be an assurance in the essence of faith, then it would follow, that every true believer behoved always to have such assurance as to be free of doubting; which lies cross to the experience of the generation of the righteous. But this objection goes upon a palpable mistake, as if faith and a believer were one and the same thing. We do indeed assert, that there is no doubting in faith; for faith and doubting are commonly in scripture directly opposed one to another: but though there be no doubting in faith, yet there is much doubting in the believer, by reason of prevailing unbelief and indwelling sin. If it were true that assurance is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always assured; by the same way of reasoning

reasoning it would follow, that resting is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always actually staying and resting himself on the Lord; or that trusting is not of the nature of faith, because the believer is not always trusting. It may be as well argued, that seeing is not of the nature of the eye, because sometimes the eye-lids are closed; or that heat is not of the nature of fire, because its heat is not perceptible by reason of the ashes wherewith it is covered; or that light is not of the nature of the sun, because sometimes it is eclipsed by the interposing moon. Remove the ashes, and the heat of the fire will appear; remove interposing bodies, and the sun will have light; open the eye lids, and the eye will see: so do but remove ignorance, unbelief, and other incumbrances of corruption from faith, and see what the nature of it is then. For it is of the 'nature of faith' in the abstract that the present question is, and not what lodges in the believer who hath faith. In the believer there is 'as it were the company of two armies,' grace and corruption, love and enmity, repentance and impenitence, faith and unbelief; but these are not to be confounded together, because they are in the same subject. We must not exclude complacency and delight in the Lord out of the nature of love, because, through remaining enmity and corruption, his love is so overpowered, that he cannot perceive any such thing in him, but rather the reverse of love. The same may be said of other graces. So here we must not conclude, that there is nothing of this applicatory assurance in faith, because of prevailing unbelief, and doubts flowing therefrom.

*Proposition 5.* is this, That as there is a great difference

ference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of sense ; so there is yet a far greater difference between the *my* of faith, (or of true sense flowing from it), and the *my* of presumption. Presumptuous confidence has its *my's*, as well as faith and well-grounded experience ; as we see plain in the case of Balaam, Numb. xxii. 18. ' If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God.' Now, say you, since a presumptuous confidence may speak in the dialect of true faith and experience, wherein lies the difference ? This is a very material and momentous question ; and, with a dependence on the Father of lights, I shall attempt a resolution of it in the few following particulars.

1<sup>st</sup>, The assurance of faith receives and applies Christ to the soul in particular, as he lies in the revelation and grant that is made of him to sinners in the word, which is the immediate ground of faith ; whereas presumptuous confidence, though it claims an interest in him, yet does it not upon this bottom, or in God's method and way of conveyance. The apostle tells us, Rom. x. 8. that Christ, and his righteousness and salvation, is brought nigh unto us ' in the word of faith.' What is the design of a covenant of grace, and of these declarations, offers, and promises of grace, that are made to us in the glorious gospel, but just to bring Christ so near to us, as we by believing may come to apply him and his whole fulness to our own souls ? John xx. 31. ' These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.' If we would find Christ, and eternal life in him, we need not ' ascend into heaven,'



or 'descend into hell,' in search for him, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 6, 7. But we are to search for him in the 'scriptures, for they are they which 'testify of him.' Christ is brought near to us in the testimony or record of God in the word, where 'he 'gives us eternal life, in his Son Christ Jesus,' 1 John v. 11. Now, faith, in its direct act, I say, takes Christ, and claims him upon this grant and gift that is made of him in the word of grace; and upon no other foundation will it adventure to assert its interest in him. Like an honest man, who will not intermeddle with goods, money, or the estate of another, unless he have a charter, bond, testament, promise, or some such security, upon which he may do it warrantably, without vicious intromission: whereas the thief and robber puts to his hand, without looking after any such warrant; if he gets what he has a mind for any how, he is easy. † Here lies a fatal flaw in the faith of many hearers of the gospel; they grasp at Christ and his salvation, but they overleap the gift and grant of him in the word, as the immediate foundation of their faith. If we consult the experience of the saints in scripture, we shall find their faith terminating immediately upon the word: 'In his word do 'I hope,' says David. 'Remember the word upon 'which thou hast caused me to hope. I rejoice at 'thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.' Their faith did come by hearing or reading the word. This is the chariot in which the Lord rides, when he presents himself to us as the object of our faith and trust: and therefore that faith which overlooks the promise and offer of the gospel, is but a presumptuous faith.

' Gilead

† See Durham on Is. liii. sermon 5. last paragraph.

'Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine,' says David, in that forecited lxth Psalm, because 'God hath spoken in his holiness.' So says an applying faith, Pardon is mine, peace is mine, grace is mine, glory is mine in Christ, yea, God himself is 'my God;' because God hath made over himself and all these things in Christ to me, in the covenant of promise, or testament of my elder brother, sealed and confirmed by his blood. But, say you, may not a presumptuous hypocrite pretend to bottom his faith upon the promise, and claim an interest in him, even upon that ground? An answer to this leads me to a

2d Difference between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumptuous confidence, namely this, That though the presumptuous person may run away with the promise, yet he does not embrace the promise 'as it is 'in Jesus,' or 'as Jesus is in it.' This is a mystery which only can be explained to purpose by him who 'openeth the book, and looses the seven seals 'thereof.' The view I have of it, you may take up as follows. The covenant, and all the promises of it, are made to Christ as the first heir, both by birth and purchase: he is God's first-born, and therefore the heir of the inheritance of eternal life. But besides, as the second Adam, by his obedience and death, having fulfilled the law, and satisfied justice; the promise of life, which was forfeited by the sin and disobedience of the first Adam, comes to be settled upon him, and his seed in him. Now, matters standing thus, the soul, in applying of the promise, takes its title thereto, not upon the ground of any thing in itself, but comes in only upon Christ's right and title; his righteousness is the only proper, entitling, meri-

torious condition of the covenant, and of all the promises thereof. Here lies the failure in presumptuous confidence, that the man being never cleanly beat off from Adam's covenant, he is always seeking to found his title to the promise in himself, some good condition or qualification wrought in him, or done by him. Thus many attempt to enter themselves heirs to the promises, and to eternal life, but shall never be able: Why? Because they do not by faith enter themselves heirs in Christ, or upon his right and title: and 'another foundation can no man lay;' for 'the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thus, I say, presumptuous faith does not embrace the promise 'as it is in Christ, in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen.' And then, I say, he does not embrace the promise 'as Jesus is in it;' for as all the promises are 'in Christ,' so Christ is 'in all the promises.' What is it that is bequeathed in his testament, but himself and all his fulness? He was the great mercy promised to the fathers. When the covenant was promulgate unto Adam, and afterward unto Abraham, what else was it, but just a promise of Christ? And when, in process of time, the covenant of grace came to be further opened in a variety of promises, what were they all, but Christ, and the grace that is in him, parcelled out to us, that we by faith might apply him, and the grace that is in him, according to our need? And hence it is that the believer, in applying the promise, finding Christ in it, he eats it, and it is to him 'the joy and rejoicing of his heart;' he finds the Lord in his own word of grace, and this makes it relieving and comforting to his soul; he drinks in 'the sincere



‘ sincere milk of the word,’ because therein he ‘ tastes  
 ‘ that the Lord is gracious.’ But now presumptuous  
 faith is more taken up with the naked promises, than  
 with feeding the soul with Christ in and by the pro-  
 mise. A man that is possessed of Christ by faith, he  
 has not Christ and his promise by him, as a man has  
 money lying by him in his coffer; he has not the co-  
 venant and promises, as a man has his bonds and  
 charters in his cabinet, which perhaps he will not  
 look to once in a year: no, but he has Christ in the  
 word of grace, as a man has his bread by him, which  
 he is daily feeding and living upon: hence this ap-  
 plicatory faith is called an ‘ eating the flesh, and a  
 ‘ drinking the blood of Christ;’ which expression  
 implies such an application of Christ to ourselves, as  
 carries soul-nourishment along with it. True faith  
 roots the soul in Christ, just as a tree is rooted in the  
 ground; the prolific virtue of the earth enters into  
 the tree, and the tree at the same time strikes and  
 spreads its fibres into the earth, and draws sap and  
 moisture therefrom, sending a digested nourishment  
 through the whole, whereby it is made to grow and  
 bring forth fruit. So here, in believing, the Spirit  
 of life which is in Christ Jesus enters into the soul;  
 and at the same time, there is as it were a sprig and  
 fibre passing from every faculty of the soul, striking  
 into Christ, and drawing a digested sap from him,  
 whereby the soul is made to grow and flourish in grace  
 and holiness. Hence we are said to be ‘ his work-  
 ‘ manship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’  
 And, ‘ Those that be planted in the house of the  
 ‘ Lord,’ do ‘ flourish in the courts of our God.’

3dly, True faith receives and applies Christ accord-

ing to the order that God has laid in his offices; but presumptuous faith inverts that order. The order that God has laid in the execution and application of the offices of Christ, is this. Christ comes by his word and Spirit, as a *prophet*, enlightening the sinner's mind with the knowledge of his lost estate by nature, and the way of his recovery through his atoning blood and satisfaction; upon which the soul, by faith, turns in to him as a *priest*, taking sanctuary under the covert of his everlasting righteousness; and so submits unto him as a *king*, receiving the law from his mouth, and yielding itself unto his government, from a principle of gratitude to him who has bought it with a price. But now, the presumptuous faith of the legalist inverts and disturbs this comely order laid by infinite wisdom among the offices of Christ: for in his way of applying Christ, he begins with the *kingly* office, pretending to obey him as a *law-giver*; and, upon this ground, expects that Christ will save him as a *priest* by his righteousness; and thus makes his own obedience the ground of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And what else is this, but to bring *money and price* contrary to the express command of God? *Is. lv. 1.* Nothing can be of a more pernicious tendency toward the overthrow of the freedom of God's grace, in the great affair of justification and salvation. Hence it is the apostle so much inveighs against this method of seeking justification, in the Galatians; insomuch that he tells them expressly, that by this way they made themselves 'debtors to do the whole law;' yea, says he, 'Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from  
' grace,'

‘ grace,’ Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. This method of inverting the order of Christ’s offices, and making the first act of faith to terminate upon him as a *king*, as it is a way of thinking most agreeable to nature, which runs with a mighty bias towards Adam’s covenant; so, I judge, nature is much fortified in this way of taking up the method of salvation by Christ, by the strain of some mens doctrine in our day, who inculcate *faith* and *repentance* as *new precepts* given out by Christ in the gospel, which were never required in the moral law of the ten commandments. For if this be so, then inevitably we must first obey Christ as a *king*, by repenting and believing, in order to our being justified by him as a *priest*; besides many other dangerous consequences which are unavoidable upon this new law-scheme. All which are avoided, by teaching, with the strain of orthodox divines, that there are no *precepts* in the *gospel* strictly taken; and that Christ in the gospel giveth no *new laws*, but inforceth the *old law*, viz. the *moral*, which being adopted unto the gospel-dispensation, obligeth us to believe in Christ upon his being revealed to us in the gospel, and consequently to repent also in an evangelical manner. For that these duties of faith and repentance, as to their essence, are required in the very first commandment of the moral law, is indisputably evident: and I do think it strange to find it controverted by any who embrace and own the doctrine of the church of Scotland, particularly the Larger Catechism, where that point is plainly determined, in the explication of the foresaid first commandment. But it is not proper to insist on this controversy in a discourse of this nature; if need be, it may be discoursed apart.

4thly,



4<sup>th</sup>y, Another difference betwixt the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, is this, That the assurance of faith will maintain its claim, and humble confidence, even under sad challenges, and a deep and abasing sense of much prevailing iniquity; whereas presumptuous confidence succumbs and fails upon the prevalency of sin. The reason of this is, because the ground of presumptuous confidence is within the man; some good disposition and qualification which he finds within him, as he apprehends, which being dashed by the eruption of his reigning lusts, he has no more to look to, the foundation of his confidence is gone. But now, faith builds and bottoms its confidence, not within, but on something without, namely, the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and the mercy of God running in this channel, exhibit in the word of grace. Here it is that faith sets down its foot, and upon this foundation it stands, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. And thus, having the ground of its confidence from without, it is not shaken with every insurrection from within. An instance whereof we see in David, Psalm lxxv. 3. The holy man, in the first part of the verse, cries out, under a sense of the strength, power, and guilt of sin, 'Iniquities prevail against me.' Well, but what says faith in such a case? 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' Another instance of the like nature, we see in the same holy man, Psalm cxxx. We find him, verse 3. under such a sense of sin and guilt, that, viewing himself as he stood in the eye of the law and justice, he cannot shun to own, 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?' Well, but where

where does David's faith find a standing in such a case? Only in the mercy and grace of a reconciled God in Christ; and therefore he adds, verse 4. 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared; and plenteous redemption,' that thou mayst be sought unto. I do own, that a real believer may be sadly shaken, as to the confidence of his interest in Christ, under prevailing iniquity; but this certainly is his infirmity, and not his faith. Many real believers live more by sense than by faith; and hence it comes that they are soon shaken, whenever sensible experience is overclouded, under the sense of prevailing iniquity; though the pain of it is a just correction of their folly. Whenever faith recovers from under the fit of unbelief, and views what the soul is, and has, in Christ, and in the covenant, it recovers its stability and confidence, and withal brings into the the soul strength against corruption, so that it goes out against it like a giant refreshed with wine. But, say you, may not presumptuous faith recover its confidence also? I answer, No doubt it may: but then the difference lies here, True faith goes to work in a quite different way, in order to the soul's recovery, from that which the presumptuous legalist takes. When the terrors of the law, or challenges of conscience, have at any time battered down presumptuous confidence, the man goes to work, and fills up the hole that the law has made in his soul, with the new earth of his own obedience, reformation, duties, and the like, and with this untempered mortar he daubs and makes up the breach made in his conscience. But, on the other hand, though the believer be as diligent in the way of duty as the other, yet nothing in

in heaven or earth can satisfy him under challenges, or afford him ease or quiet, but Christ himself, and his righteousness apprehended and applied by faith: no *balm* but that of *Gilead* can cure his wound; he fetches his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness; all is but *lofs* and *dung* in comparison of this, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

There are several other differences might be given between the *my* of faith, and the *my* of presumption, if I were not afraid of being tedious. Only, in short, the more of the assurance of faith, or yet of well-grounded experience, the more lowliness, humility, and self abasement. The higher that the soul is exalted in and by Christ, the lower does it sink in its own eyes, saying with David, when God promised to build him a sure house, and that the Messiah should spring of his loins, 'Who am I, O Lord God? and 'what is my house, that thou hast brought me hither-  
'to?' The poor believer, in this case, sees himself to be such a miracle of rich and sovereign grace, that he is even wrapped up in a silent wonder, and put to an everlasting stand, that he knows not what to say, 'And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?' And 'what can David say more?' But now, the more of a presumptuous confidence, the more pride and self-conceit, like Laodicea, 'I am rich, and increased  
'with goods, and have need of nothing;' accompanied with an undervaluing of others in comparison of themselves, like the proud Pharisee, 'God, I  
'thank thee, that I am not as other men, or even as  
'this publican.'

Again, presumptuous assurance cherishes some secret and beloved idol: the man spares some right-hand



hand or right-eye, sin; and commonly his deceitful heart argues for its being spared, because grace doth abound. But now, true faith and experience purifies the heart, and engages the man to an impartial and universal opposition to all sin, as dishonourable to God, and grieving to his Spirit; and readily he bends his principal force against these sins, which receive the greatest advantages against him, by interest, custom, constitution, or education; and the consideration of abounding grace is so far from encouraging him in sin, that it teaches him to 'deny all ungodliness and 'worldly lusts,' and to 'live soberly, righteously, and 'godly in this present world.'

Lastly, The *my* of faith, or solid experience, is always accompanied with much love to the person of Christ, and resignation of soul to him; for 'faith 'worketh by love.' And therefore, at the same time that the soul is enabled to say, 'My beloved is mine,' it cannot shun to add, 'And I am his. One shall 'say, I am the Lord's.' The man presents himself 'a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which 'is his reasonable service.' But now, as one well observes, presumption is lame of one hand: it has a hand to take pardon, to take heaven, and the benefits of Christ; but as it has no true love to his person, so it has not a hand to give or resign the whole man to the Lord, to be for him, and not for another: and the plain reason of this is, that the power of natural enmity was never broken, and the man is married to the law, and to his lusts also. But passing this, I proceed to,

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the FULL assurance of faith.*

III. **T**HE *third* general head proposed in the method, was to speak a little of the *FULL assurance of faith*; for there is a plain gradation in the apostle's way of speaking; there is *faith*, then the *assurance* of faith, and the *full assurance* of faith. Having spoken of the two first degrees, I proceed now to the last and highest degree of faith.

Before I go on directly to shew what this *full assurance* of faith is, I premise these two or three things, which I conceive to be imported in this expression of the Spirit of God. (1.) I premise, that the faith of every believer is not of the same *size* and *strength*. Some have a *strong*, and others have a *weak* faith: yea, the faith of the strongest believer, like the moon, has its waxings and wainings; or like the sea, its ebblings and flowings. Although every believer be in Christ, yet every believer has not the same measure of faith; as every star is in the heavens, though every star be not of the same magnitude. The rounds of Jacob's ladder were not all at the top, though every round was a step towards heaven; so though every faith be not triumphing in a full assurance, yet every true faith is bending towards it. You may see one believer under a full gale of the Spirit of faith, crying, with Job, chap. xix 25. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth:' while another labours under such discouragements, that, like the publican, he 'stands afar off,' with the tear in his eye, crying, 'God be merciful

‘merciful to me a sinner.’ You may see one saying with Paul, ‘He loved me, and gave himself for me;’ another, through the prevalence of unbelief, saying, ‘Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Hath he forgotten to be gracious?’ Perhaps you shall find one believer surmounting all fears, saying with the apostle, ‘Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?’ &c. While another is combating with many doubts, ready to raze foundations, saying, ‘I am cast out of thy sight;’ and all men are liars that will say otherwise, the prophets of God not excepted. It is with believers, as it is with children in a family; one perhaps is lying in the cradle, another led by the mother or nurse, another can walk alone, a fourth come to such full strength that he is able for work and business. Thus in the household of God there are ‘babes, young men, and fathers.’ (2.) I premise, that it is the duty of every believer, yea, of the weakest, to press after faith in the *highest degree* of it. Hence it is that Christ frequently checks his disciples for the weakness of their faith, ‘Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?’ True faith is a progressive thing, it goes on from one degree to another: hence is that expression of the apostle, Rom. i. 17. ‘The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.’ Faith in its first and weaker, and faith in its repeated and stronger actings, feeds and centres upon the righteousness of God’s operation and imputation, for acceptance, pardon, and salvation. It is of the nature of all true grace, particularly of the grace of faith, to breathe after its own increase and perfection:



perfection: hence is that prayer of the disciples, 'Lord, increase our faith;' and that of the poor man in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' We must forget things that are behind, and reach forth unto things that are before: 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' (3.) I premise, that the certainty or assurance of *application*, as explained above, ebbs or flows according to the strength or weakness of the *assent* of faith. That there are degrees of assurance, will be controverted by none, who have any knowledge either of divinity or philosophy. The very words of the apostle in the text import, that we are not to rest in a lower, but ought to press after the highest degree of the assurance of faith: and the apostle accounts it a great blessing to the Thessalonians, that they had *much assurance*, 1 Thess. i. 5. plainly intimating, that some true assurance might be in a less degree. Now, I say, this assurance of application bears a proportion unto faith's assent, and waxes or wanes as it is strong or feeble; so that a strong assent has a strong application, and a weak assent a weak application.

These things premised, I proceed to inquire what this *full assurance of faith* is, or, wherein it consists. And, in one word, I conceive it lies in such 'a firm and fixed persuasion, confidence, or trust in the faithfulness of a God in Christ, pledged in his covenant or promise, as overcomes and tramples upon all difficulties and improbabilities, all doubts and fears as to the actual performance of what is promised in God's time and way; and all this with particular application to the soul itself.' This description I would

would illustrate and explain in its several branches, were it not done upon the matter on the former two heads, this being nothing but a higher degree of the self-same faith formerly described. Such an act of faith we find put forth by Abraham, Rom. iv. 20, 21. where we are told that 'he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.' This full assurance of faith, though mountains of impediments were in its way, yet it makes no more of them than if they were a plain; it overleaps and overlooks them all, fixing its eyes only upon the power and faithfulness of the blessed promiser; as we see clearly exemplified in the case of Abraham. His own body was dead, and incapable of procreation; Sarah's womb was barren, and incapable of conception: sense and reason in this case would have been ready to conclude, that it was impossible ever Abraham should have a son. But we are told, verse 19. that he entirely abstracted from all considerations of that kind, 'Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' He would not so much as listen unto the surmises of carnal reason; flesh and blood are put out of doors; and he rests with an assured confidence, without any doubting or hesitation, upon the fidelity of the promiser, being certain that God would do to him in particular as he had said, when the time of the vision should come. In like manner we find, that after Abraham had gotten his beloved Isaac, the son of the promise, what a terrible shock, may

may one think, would it be to his faith in the promise, when God commanded him to take Isaac, of whom the promised seed, Christ, was to come, and offer him upon one of the mountains of Moriah! Gen. xxii. Reason here might be ready to object, and that not without great colour of religion, Can God, who has so severely forbidden murder, require me to imbrue my hands in the blood of my own son? Will not such a thing be an eternal reproach to Abraham in his religion? What will the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites, and Perizzites, which dwell in the land? What will Sarah say, and how shall I ever look her in the face? But especially, what shall become of the promise, and the veracity of him that made it, saying, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called?' Surely, might unbelief and sense say, either this command is a delusion, or else the promise is a lie. But Abraham had a full assurance of faith as to the stability of the promise; and therefore he would upon all hazards obey the command of a promising God: he was fully persuaded, that though Isaac were sacrificed and burnt to ashes, yet out of the very ashes of his sacrificed son, God could, and actually would raise up Isaac again, and so accomplish his own word of promise. Abraham, on the account of this his noble and gallant faith, is fitly called 'the father of the faithful,' his faith being proposed as a pattern to all others for their imitation; and every true believer is on this score a *child of Abraham*. And let none imagine, that they are not obliged to believe with such a faith as Abraham had; for the apostle expressly tells us, that the history of his faith stands upon record in scripture, 'not for his sake alone, but for us also,



‘also,’ that we, after his example, may be encouraged to ‘believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord ‘from the dead,’ Rom. iv. 23, 24.

*Object.* O, say you, if I had as good a ground for my faith as Abraham had; if I were as sure that the promise were to *me*, as Abraham was, I think I could believe with a full assurance of faith, as he did; but there lies the strait. I answer, You and I have as good a ground of faith as ever Abraham had. Abraham had a promising God in Christ to trust, and so have we; you have the same God, the same Christ, the same covenant, the same promise, as Abraham had. But, say you, God spake to Abraham in *particular, by name*, when he gave him the promise, saying, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth ‘be blessed.’ I answer, Although you be not designed by name and surname, as Abraham was, yet a promising God in Christ addresses himself as particularly to you in the word of grace, and dispensation of the covenant and promise, as though he called to you out of heaven by name and surname, saying, ‘To you (*i. e.* ‘to you sinners of Adam’s race) is the word of this ‘salvation sent. The promise is unto you that are ‘afar off,’ &c. And not only is the promise presented, but an express command of believing superadded, requiring and binding every particular person, to take hold of it, and embrace it: so that, whatever shifts and evasions the unbelieving and deceitful heart may make, the promise of God comes as close and home to every individual hearer of the gospel, as that promise did to Abraham, when God bespoke him with an audible voice out of heaven; yea, ‘we have a more sure ‘word of prophecy, unto which we would do well to  
‘take

‘take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.’ Further, let it be considered, that that promise was first presented unto Adam as the object and foundation of his faith, before he could believe it; and by believing it, became *his* in possession; or in believing it, he was possessed of it as *his own*; for, upon a supposition that he had not believed, he had never been possessed of the promised blessing. In like manner the promise is presented to you as the immediate ground of believing; and in believing, you come to be possessed of the great things contained in the promise; but if you do not believe, you shall not see the salvation of God. Thus you see that you have the same ground of faith, and the same warrant for believing, that Abraham had: and there is nothing to keep you from a full assurance of faith, or a believing without staggering at the promise, like Abraham, unless it be your own ignorance and unbelief.

I do own, as was hinted already, that every true believer does not come the length of Abraham, to believe without staggering; but that is not the question. The present question is, If we have not now as good and firm a ground, and as good a right to believe the promise, as Abraham had? If Christ, and his salvation and righteousness, be not brought as near to us in the word of faith, as it was unto him? This is what none, who understand the privilege of a New-Testament dispensation, will adventure to deny; yea, I will adventure to say, that the ground of faith is laid before us under the New Testament, with a far greater advantage than ever Abraham had; inasmuch as the gospel-revelation is much more clear, and brings Christ and his salvation much nearer to us, than ever he was under

under any period of the Old-Testament dispensation. *Abraham saw his day only afar off*; whereas we live in that very day which he saw at such a prodigious distance: and therefore we have much more ground to believe without staggering than he had. And therefore, 'seeing we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;' and 'seeing we have a new and living way consecrated for us, through the vail of his flesh;' and 'seeing we have an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in FULL ASSURANCE of faith,' &c.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the GROUNDS of faith's assurance.*

IV. **T**HE *fourth* thing proposed in the method, was to *inquire into the GROUNDS of this doctrine*; or *what it is that faith has to build its confidence upon, in drawing near to God, with full assurance of acceptance*. In answer to this question, I shall not at present enter upon the particular grounds specified by the apostle in the preceding verses, having discoursed on them apart in several sermons, where he shews that every bar and impediment on the part of law and justice are fully removed, through the complete satisfaction and prevalent mediation of the Son of God, as our great high priest; upon which a promise of welcome and hearty acceptance comes forth from a reconciled God, to every one who will come to him in this new and living way, for grace and mercy to help in a time of need. Thus you will see the



apostle's argument runs, by comparing this, and the preceding verses, with the verse immediately following, particularly the last clause of it, 'For faithful is he that hath promised;' which clause, included in a parenthesis, I conceive stands connected, not only with the words immediately preceding in the same verse, but with the words of my text also: and the scope of the apostle is, as if he said, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,' &c. Why? 'For faithful is he that hath promised' us welcome 'into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus;' faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the 'new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us:' faithful is he that hath promised to pity, pardon, hear, and help, through the mediation of the 'great high priest over the house of God.' And therefore, seeing his faithfulness is pawned to receive us in this way of his own devising, let us answer his faithfulness, by 'drawing near in full assurance of faith,' or with a full and certain persuasion, that, according to his promise, we shall be *accepted in the beloved*, who is the *door* to the holiest, the *new and living way*, and the *high priest over the house of God*.

So that you see the next or immediate ground of faith, or full assurance thereof, in drawing near to God, is, God's own promise of acceptance through Jesus Christ; with which promises the word every where abounds, *If. lx. 7. If. lvi. 7. Mark xi. 24. Matth. vii. 7. John xiv. 13, 14.* Now, faith, eyeing and pleading the promise of God in Christ, has many things to bear it up unto a full assurance; I shall instance a few of many.

1. The *grace, mercy, and goodness* of a promising God,

God, revealed and proclaimed in the world, is a noble ground for sinners, and yet more for saints, to trust him, and draw near to him through Christ, with a full assurance of faith: Psal. xxxvi. 7. 'How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' It is cross to the very dictates of nature, for a man to trust one whom he apprehends to be an enemy; yea, if we have but a jealousy, that one bears us an ill-will, or designs our hurt, we will not trust or confide in him: but persuade a man once that such an one is his friend, that he hath an entire love and kindness for him, and wants only an opportunity to do him the greatest services he is capable; in that case, he will trust him without hesitation. Just so is it in the case in hand: so long as we conceive God to be an implacable enemy, our prejudice and enmity against him will remain; and while enmity against God stands in its full strength, it is absolutely impossible we can have any trust or confidence in him; instead of drawing near to him with full assurance of faith, we flee from him, like our first parents, under the awful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance: but let us once be persuaded that he is a God of love, grace, pity, and good-will in Christ, then, and never till then, will we put our trust under the shadow of his wings. And therefore, to break the strength of our enmity and prejudice, and so to conciliate our trust in him, he is at the greatest pains imaginable to persuade us, that he bears a hearty liking and good-will towards us in Christ. And there are more especially these three ways God takes to convince us of his good-will toward men upon earth.

1<sup>st</sup>, By solemn proclamations and declarations of his mercy and grace: Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. there the Lord passed by Moses, and proclaimed his name to him; and what is it? 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that he will by no means clear the guilty;' or, as some read it, 'in clearing he will clear,' *i. e.* in clearing the sinner of guilt by pardoning grace, he will clear himself of injustice; he will make it appear that he is just, when he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Every where in scripture is the pardoning mercy of God proclaimed and presented as an encouragement to sinners to trust in him, Psal. cxxx. 7. 'Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.'

2<sup>dly</sup>, By solemn oath. Lest we should disbelieve his word, he superadds his oath, to convince us that he has no ill-will, but a hearty good-will toward our salvation and happiness, through the new and living way: Ezek. xxxiii. 11. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' *An oath* among men is for confirmation of a controverted truth, and is to them an end of all strife, (says the apostle), Heb. vi. 16. Well, Sirs, shall the oath of a man be so much regarded, as to determine controversies among men? How much more is the oath of the great God to be regarded, pawning his very life upon it, that he is not willing that any should perish, that he bears a hearty



heartly good will toward our salvation through Christ? Shall this be any more a controversy with us? To entertain a doubt or jealousy of what he says, is to make him a liar; and to doubt and disbelieve what he swears, is to charge a God of truth with perjury. And beware of looking upon it as a matter of indifferency, whether you believe this declared good-will, mercy, and grace of God, or not; for it must needs be a matter of vast importance, wherein God interposes the solemnity of an oath; and to think otherwise, is to charge the eternal God with a profanation of his own name, which he will not suffer in others without the highest resentment.

3dly, As if his word and his oath were not enough to convince us of his mercy, love, and good-will toward us, he hath given the most convincing and practical demonstration of it that was possible for God to give; and that is, by giving himself, in the person of his eternal Son, to be incarnate, or manifested in our nature; yea, to be made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. O how great is this mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh! Without controversy, great and unsearchable is the mystery of love and good-will that shines with a meridian lustre in an incarnate Deity. If God had not loved us, and borne such a hearty desire after our happiness and salvation, would he even have made such a near approach to us as to dwell in our nature, when he passed by the nature of angels? Yea, he was not content to become one with us in nature; but he goes further, and becomes one in law with us; he puts his name into our debt-bond, and becomes 'sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' he becomes 'a curse

‘for us, that we might inherit the blessing.’ It was a view of this design of love to man, shining in the incarnation of the Son of God, which made the angels at his birth to break forth with that celestial anthem, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men,’ Luke ii. 14. Now, this love and good-will of God toward man, in the incarnation of his eternal Son, is proposed in the gospel-revelation, as the greatest encouragement imaginable for guilty rebellious sinners to lay aside their enmity and prejudice against God, and so to put their trust and confidence in him; as is plain, like a sun-beam, from that great text, John iii. 16. ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son:’ Why, what was God’s design in all this good-will? ‘That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Because of the excellency of this love, the sons of men do put their trust under the shadow of his wings. Now, I say, faith, in drawing near to God, it takes a view of this mercy and love of God in Christ, and upon this ground raises itself up sometimes so high, as to draw near in full assurance of acceptance: for still it would be remembered, that faith, under the conduct of the Spirit, takes up this revealed love and mercy of God to sinners, with particular application thereof to the soul itself, as was before hinted. And what can be more encouraging to a trust, without doubting of acceptance? O then, ‘let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy.’ O do not entertain jealousies of a God of love, as though he were displeased or dissatisfied with you for your trusting in his mercy; for ‘the Lord taketh

‘taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that  
‘hope in his mercy.’

2. Faith grounds its assurance upon the infinite power of a promising God. Being once persuaded of his love, mercy, and good-will in Christ, it proceeds to fasten its foot upon *everlasting strength*, as fully able to fulfil what he has promised, saying, I know that thou canst do every thing, and ‘there is nothing ‘too hard for thee.’ Indeed infinite power, armed with wrath and fury, is the terror of a guilty sinner; but infinite power, animated with infinite love, proclaiming, *Fury is not in me*, through the *ransom* that *I have found*, is a noble ground of trust, and may embolden a guilty sinner to ‘take hold of his strength, ‘that he may make peace with him.’ Hence it is, that the power of God in Christ is frequently presented in scripture as a ground of trust, Is. xxvi. 4. ‘Trust ‘ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is ‘everlasting strength.’ The faith of Abraham founded itself upon this rock of the power of God, in that forecited instance, Rom. iv. when he believed without staggering at the promise. Being first persuaded of God’s good will toward him, in giving him a promise of the Messiah to spring of his loins, ‘in whom ‘all the nations of the earth should be blessed;’ he next fixes the eye of his faith upon the power of this promising God, and was ‘fully persuaded, that what ‘he had promised, he was able also to perform.’ So, Matth. ix. 27. we read of two blind men following Christ, sending their cries after him, ‘Thou son of ‘David, have mercy on us.’ They first believed that Christ was the promised Messiah, the son of David; and in this they saw mercy and good-will to man upon  
H 4 earth,



earth, he being the seed of the woman, that should bruise the head of the serpent. Well, Christ leads them on next to take a view of the power of God in him, as a further ground of trust and confidence, vers. 28. 'Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They answer, *Yea, Lord*: and thereupon Christ says unto them, vers. 29. *According to your faith, be it unto you.* Thus, I say, faith grounds its trust, confidence, or assurance, in drawing near to God through the new and living way, upon the power of a promising God.

O Sirs, there is no such distance betwixt God's saying and his doing, as there is among men: for his saying is doing: Psal. xxxiii. 9. 'He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' There is an omnipotence or almightiness both in his word of command, and in his word of promise; therefore it is called *the word of his power*, Heb. i. 3. And by this powerful word, he upholds the great fabric of heaven and earth, that they do not return unto their original nothing: and may not our faith venture to stand upon that bottom, on which heaven and earth stands?' We are not afraid that this ponderous globe of earth, which hangs in the liquid air, slide away from under our feet with its own weight: Why? Because we believe that the word of God's power has fixed it in its proper place, that it shall not be removed for ever. Why should we not rest with as much assured confidence, as to everlasting concerns, upon God's covenant and promise, seeing the same power of God is in the word of promise, as in that word which upholds the earth? Yea, 'the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord,' his  
word

word of grace and promise, the foundation of faith and trust, 'endureth for ever.' This is a consideration which at once removes the principal discouragements that faith labours under. What is it that weakens our faith, and keeps it from arriving at a full assurance, as to the performance of the promise, but one of these two? Either we look upon the performance of the promise as difficult, or uncertain. Now, faith eying the power of a promising, reconciled God in Christ, can easily surmount both, and conclude, that the performance of the promise is both easy and certain. (1.) It is *certain*, for it depends upon the will of an unchangeable God, the promise being a declaration of God's purpose or will of grace; he was willing to promise, for he has actually done it, *the word is gone out of his mouth*; and he is willing to perform, for he is *a God of truth*, always *yea*, and *amen*. (2.) Faith viewing the power of God, sees the performance to be *easy*. What more easy than a word speaking? and yet one word from the mouth of God, can give being and accomplishment to all the promises, without any pain, cost, trouble, or hazard. The covenant of grace may be resembled unto a tree, the promises to the branches of the tree, loaden with all manner of precious fruit. Now, the least word, the least breath from the mouth of God, shakes the tree, and makes all the fruits of it to drop down, as it were, into the believer's bosom. And O, may the believer argue, will not he, who *so loved a lost world*, as to give his *only begotten Son*, and *who loved me*, and gave himself *for me*, will he not waite a word, or the breath of his mouth on *me*? Believe it, there is nothing but a word between you and all *the sure mercies of David*: yea,

the word is already passed out of his mouth, I mean, the word of grace and promise; and there remains nothing but for you to believe, trust, and confide in it, and him that made it; and, in your so doing, all the sure mercies of the promise are your own in Christ. I suppose you do not doubt but that God who cannot lie has promised. Now, there is as much reason to believe that he will perform, as to believe that he has passed his promise; for, as was hinted above, to promise and perform, to say and to do, are all one thing with him. Indeed when men promise, there is much ground to doubt the performance, because frequently things cast up afterward, which render it impracticable for them to do as they have said. But no such thing can happen unto him, who perfectly foresees all future events, and who commands things that are not, as if they were. Now, I say, faith sees all this, and thereby raises itself up unto a full assurance, at least there is ground here for a full assurance of faith, and no ground at all for doubting and wavering. And were not our faith pinioned with ignorance and unbelief, it could not mis to believe without staggering upon this ground, as did the faith of Abraham.

3. The *veracity* and *faithfulness* of a God in Christ, pawned in the promise, is another ground upon which faith builds, when it draws near with a full assurance. Faithfulness in God, and faith in man, are correlates; and there is such a fitness and relation betwixt these two, that our faith cannot subsist without faithfulness in God. And, on the other hand, a revelation of God's faithfulness would have been needless, if there were not some to believe him. The light would be useless, if there were not an eye to see it; and the eye



eye would be useless, if there were no light. To an unbelieving sinner, the revelation of the divine faithfulness is as unprofitable, as light is to a blind man; and our faith would be like an eye without light, if there were not faithfulness in God. Yea, faithfulness in God is the very parent of faith in man. Faith is at first begot and wrought in the soul by some discovery of the divine faithfulness in the word of grace; and it is maintained and increased in the same way and manner. Whence is it that some do believe, and others not, who equally enjoy the same revealed warrants and grounds of faith? The matter is this, the faithfulness of God in the covenant and promise is revealed by the Spirit to the one, and veiled and hid from the other, 'the god of this world blinding the minds of them which believe not.' And whence is it, that at one time a believer is *strong in faith, giving glory to God*; and at another time, *staggers through unbelief*? The reason is this, the faithfulness of God at one time is so visible to him, that he sees it to be like a *mountain of brass* under him: at another time his light is so dark and dim, that he imagines the promise, and the faithfulness of the promiser, to be but like a *broken reed*, not able to bear his weight. But, O Sirs, what can be ground of assurance, yea of the highest and fullest assurance of faith, if not the veracity of that God, who hath *righteousness for the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness for the girdle of his reins*?

Let us but take a view of the high *securities* by which the divine *faithfulness* is engaged, as to the outmaking of his *promise*, and see if there be not *ground* for a full assurance of faith. The most jealous and suspicious heart in the world, could not desire

greater security from the most treacherous person on earth, than a God of truth has granted unto us, for our encouragement to believe.

1<sup>st</sup>, then, Let it be considered, that the *bare promise*, though there were no more, is abundance of security, especially if we consider whose promise it is; it is *God that cannot lie, who promises*. A graceless Balaam gives him this testimony, 'God is not a man, ' that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he ' should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? ' or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' We will adventure to trust the word of a man like ourselves, especially if he be a man of integrity and honesty, who, we think, will not falsify his word: and shall we have trust and credit to give to a man that may lie and repent, and yet no credit or trust to give to him *for whom it is impossible to lie*? God has so great a regard to his word of promise, that it is of more worth in his reckoning than heaven and earth, and all the visible creation: yea, 'Heaven and earth ' shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what he ' hath spoken, shall never fall to the ground.' Yea, I will adventure to say further, that the divine faithfulness is so much engaged in the promise, that his very *being* is concerned therein. Man may break his word, and continue to be man still; but God could not be God, if he were not faithful and true, because faithfulness is essential to his very nature and being. Now, is not that word a sufficient ground of faith, and of full assurance, as to the performance of which the very *being* of a God of truth is so much concerned? But this is not all; for,

2<sup>dly</sup>, Not only is the word of promise passed out of his

his lips, but it is *entered* and *registrate* in the *volume of his book*. You know, the bare word of an honest man is good, but his written and registrate word or promise is better. When we put a man's bond in the register of human courts, it is in order to our better security, and getting the more speedy diligence thereupon. Now, God has consented to the registration of his word of promise, yea, it is actually enrolled and registrate in the scriptures of truth; and is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God? Perhaps you may think, if you had voices, visions, and revelations from heaven immediately, you could believe; but I can assure you, in the name of God, that the Bible, the book of God, which you have among your hands, is a far better, a much more solid ground of faith and trust, than any thing of that kind. The apostle Peter tells us, 2 Pet. i. 17. that he was taken up into mount Tabor, at Christ's transfiguration, and there he heard a voice coming forth from the excellent glory, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. This was a rare privilege, and a notable encouragement to believe: but yet, says he, vers. 19. 'We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed,' &c. O Sirs, think on this, and prize and improve your Bibles.

3dly, The faithfulness of God is so much engaged in the promise, that it is a *sealed deed*. The great and infinite JEHOVAH, in the person of his eternal Son, has *sealed* the promise, yea sealed it with his *blood*. Dan. ix. 27. we are told concerning the Messiah, that he should *confirm the covenant with many*. And how doth he confirm it, but by his death? Hence the blood of Christ is called *the blood of the covenant*: so Heb. ix.



in 16, 17. 'Where a testament is, there must also  
 'of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testa-  
 'ment is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is  
 'of no strength at all while the testator liveth.' Thus,  
 I say, the promise is sealed and confirmed by the blood  
 of the Lamb, the most valuable seal that ever was ap-  
 pended to any deed in the world. And, in token  
 and testimony of its being sealed by a Redeemer's  
 blood, God has appended two other visible seals unto  
 his covenant of promise, *viz.* baptism and the Lord's  
 supper, which are *seals of the righteousness of faith*;  
 that is, as I take it, seals of that covenant where God  
 promises peace and pardon, grace and glory, on the  
 score of the imputed righteousness of Christ, appre-  
 hended by faith. And whenever these sacraments are  
 dispensed to us, according to God's appointment, we  
 have a sealed and confirmed promise and testament  
 put into our hands, for our faith to feed and feast  
 upon.

4thly, The faithfulness of God is so far engaged in  
 the promise, that his *oath* is interposed: Heb. vi. 13.  
 18. there we read of *two immutable things, in which*  
*it is impossible for God to lie.* His word is immutable,  
 for it is always *yea*. But that we might have strong  
 consolation, by having a strong ground of faith and  
 confidence, he superadds his immutable oath: he not  
 only speaks, but swears. Now, observe how the a-  
 postle speaks of the oath of God, vers. 13. 'Because  
 'he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself;' *q. d.*  
 If God could have gone higher in his oath, he  
 would have done it. The form of God's oath is pe-  
 culiar to himself, *As I live*; he swears by his life, he  
 swears by his holiness, he swears by his being and God-  
 head.

head. As true as I am God, *I will bless thee*, says the Lord to Abraham, vers. 14. But, may a poor soul say, what is that to me? what interest or concern have I in God's oath to Abraham? O yes, says the apostle, this concerns you and me, 'who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,' vers. 18.

Q. d. This concerns every poor soul, that has a mind for salvation in the *new and living way consecrated for us*. He may say, and should say in himself, As sure as God said and sware to Abraham, so surely hath God said and sworn that I shall be saved, in fleeing for refuge to Christ, who is our hope. As if the Lord should say, O sinner, I set my own Son before thee in the gospel, as thy only refuge and sanctuary; I set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood; O flee, flee to him for thy life, *Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope*; for as sure as I am God, thou shalt be saved in him: *Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation*. O what a great matter is this, the oath of God! What will we ever believe, or whom will we believe, if we do not believe a God of truth swearing by his life? Do not say, you are not concerned with his oath; for as by believing you set to your seal, that he is *true* in what he says and swears; so by your unbelief you call him a *liar*, and, upon the matter, charge him with perjury, as was already hinted. And for you who have actually fled by faith unto his Son, you shall be as sure of God's blessing through eternity, as ever Abraham was, when he heard God swearing to him, 'Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee.'

5thly, The faithfulness of God is yet further engaged to believers in the promise, by giving a *pledge*

or

or *arls* of the full performance: and the pledge he gives is of more worth than heaven and earth. O, say you, what is that? I answer, It is the 'holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance,' Eph. i. 13, 14. If ever thou felt the Holy Spirit breathing on thee, by his saving influences and operations, thou hast the earnest of the inheritance, a pledge that all the promises shall be fully accomplished in God's time. You know, if a man give a pledge, it is a security for the full bargain; and if a man do not fulfil his bargain, he loses his pledge: so here, God will as soon forfeit his Spirit, as break his word. And is not this notable security to the believer? Is not this a high engagement of the faithfulness of God?

6thly, The faithfulness of God is yet further engaged in the promise, by the *concurring declaration* of the most famous *witnesses* that ever bore testimony in any cause, jointly attesting the truth of the promise, and veracity of the promiser, 1 John v. 7. 'There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.' The eternal Father attests the truth of the promise with a *Thus saith the Lord*. The Son attests it, who is the essential and substantial Word; for he is 'the truth, the Amen, the faithful and true witness,' who 'speaks in righteousness.' The Holy Ghost attests it; for he is 'the Spirit of truth, leading into all truth:' he is the 'holy Spirit of promise,' not only because he himself is promised, but because he testifies of the truth of the promise, and faithfulness of the promiser; and, by his power and efficacy, seals and stamps these upon the soul, whereby he works faith or believing. Now, all these three witnesses are *one*; not only one  
in



in essence, but one in their testimony. And what is the testimony and record of a Trinity? It is this, vers. 11. 'That God hath given (*i. e.* granted in his covenant of grace and promise) to us eternal life: and 'this life is in his Son.' And when this record or testimony of a Trinity is not believed, we make God a liar. From the whole, you see what high and deep engagements the divine faithfulness is come under for the outmaking and accomplishment of the promise. O then, 'let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; for faithful is he that hath promised 'acceptance in the beloved.'

But now, after all that has been said, some may be ready to object, It is true, the good-will, power, and veracity of the promiser, are excellent encouragements to those who have a right to the promise to draw near to God in Christ, with full assurance of faith: but that is my strait and difficulty, I doubt and fear lest I have no claim or title to the promise of welcome into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way. An answer to this leads me to,

4. A *fourth* ground (taken in connection with the former) upon which faith may build its assurance, in drawing near to God by the new and living way, and that is, the indorsement or direction of the promise of welcome through Christ. To whom, say you, is the promise indorsed? I answer, It is directed to every man to whom the joyful sound of this everlasting gospel reacheth, John iii. 16. There you see that the promise of acceptance, and of eternal life through Christ, reaches forth its arms to a lost world: 'Whosoever 'believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' So here, Whosoever draweth near to the

the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way, through the mediation of the great high priest, shall obtain grace and mercy to help them in time of need. The covenant of grace, and promises thereof, are so framed by infinite wisdom, in the external dispensation of the gospel, that they look to every man and woman, and, as it were invite them to believe, and encourage them to enter into the holiest. He that sits on the throne of grace, calls every one within his hearing, to come for grace and mercy, assuring them, that come to him who will, 'he will in no wise 'cast out.' And we that are the heralds and ministers of the great King, whose name is 'the Lord, 'merciful and gracious,' have warrant and commission to proclaim, that 'to you, men,' and 'the sons 'of man, is the word of this salvation sent: The 'promise is' directed 'unto you,' as a ground of faith, even 'to you, and to your seed, and to all that are 'afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall 'call.' There is not the least peradventure, but the call or command of believing is to every one, otherwise unbelief could not be their sin. Now, the promise, in the indorsement and direction thereof, must be as extensive as the command: these two are inseparably linked together, both in the external dispensation, and in the inward application of the Spirit; insomuch that whosoever is commanded to believe, has a right to the promise, as the immediate ground of his faith; and whosoever actually believes, and builds upon this ground, has the promise in his possession. Take away the promise from the command of believing, you separate what God has joined together, and, in effect, command men to build without

a foundation. It is true, Christ is the object of faith; but it is as true, that he can only be the object of faith to us, as he is brought near in the word of faith or promise, Rom. x. 8. And therefore, seeing the promise is to you and me, and every one who hears this gospel, I may warrantably say with the apostle, Heb. iv. 1. 'Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' From which text it is plain, that the promise of an everlasting rest, in and through Christ, is left even to these who, like the Israelites, may 'come short of it' through unbelief. And how is it left us, but to be applied by faith? Christ our elder brother has left his confirmed testament in our hands, to be improved and used in a way of believing, in order to our being actually entitled to, and in due time fully possessed of that rest, which is the purchase of his death and blood. O then let us fear, lest, when the promise is thus left us, we should seem to come short of the possession; for the promise can never be ours in possession, though 'left us,' unless we believe; as is plain from the words immediately following, vers. 2. where it is added, concerning the unbelieving Jews, 'The word preached' (viz. the promise of 'entering into his rest,' as is plain from the connection) 'did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.' A king's proclamation, and promise of pardon to a company of rebels, cannot profit any of them but such as accept of it. A legacy left by latter-will of a rich and wealthy friend, to a certain family, without specifying one individual person of the family, can only profit that person, or those branches of the family who claim right



right to the legacy, upon their friend's testament; but to the rest it is unprofitable, because, through pride, or ignorance, or sloth, they forsake their own mercy. Or suppose a letter should come indorsed to me, containing a bank note of 50, 100, or 1000 pounds Sterling, or more if you will; the indorsement of the letter to me, gives me a right to carry the bill to the bank, and ask payment; but if, through pride and conceit that I am rich,, and increased with goods, I will not receive the letter, nor ask payment of the sum, in that case I come short of my own privilege, and it becomes unprofitable to me. I own, that in every one of these similitudes there is a dissimilitude; the only use I make of them is, to shew how near Christ and his salvation is brought unto us in the word of faith or promise, that thereby we may be encouraged to draw near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith, seeing he is faithful that hath promised acceptance in this new and living way. To all that is said, I shall only add,

5. Let it encourage us to draw near in full assurance of faith, that there is no lawful impediment to hinder our access and success, in entering with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Every bar and hinderance that stood in our way, is mercifully removed by our 'great high priest,' who is 'over the house of God.' All the impediments that can be pleaded on God's part, are the law, justice, and holiness of God; and all the impediment that can be pleaded on our part is sin. Now, none of these ought to hinder our drawing near in this new and living way, with full assurance of faith.

As for the law, that cannot be a just impediment

to hinder our access; for that moment the soul enters by Christ, as the way to the Father, the law gets its end, Christ being 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' Now, can the law be against its own end, or that which gives it its due? All that the law demands is a perfect and sinless righteousness; give it that, and it has no more to seek. Now, this the law gets, that moment that a sinner believes, or draws near by the blood of Jesus. 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 3, 4. From whence it is plain, that every soul that believes in Christ, is that moment vested, by imputation, with the righteousness of the Son of God, whereby 'the law is magnified, and made honourable.' And therefore, in drawing near by the blood of Jesus, instead of having the law against us, we have the law for us, and on our side; we have a perfect law-righteousness to plead upon.

Again, as for the justice of God, this is ready to scare us, who are guilty sinners, from so much as looking toward the holiest, or the place where God's honour dwells. But this can be no impediment either to our drawing near by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance of faith: Why? That which justice demands, is a complete satisfaction for the injury done to the honour and authority of God, by the breach and violation of the holy and righteous law, which was a transcript of the purity and equity of his nature:

ture: now, when a sinner draws near, or enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, he gives justice that which it wants also, namely, a ransom of infinite value, even the ransom that God has found, the propitiation that God has set forth in the gospel, to be received by faith. The man, in believing, he, as it were, presents this ransom unto justice for the sin of his soul; and whenever justice sees this ransom of the blood of Jesus in the hand of faith, it assails and acquits the soul from all law-penalties, declaring that 'now there is no condemnation to' that man, Rom. viii. 1. Let none from henceforth 'lay any thing to' his 'charge:' for 'it is God that justifieth; who' then 'is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea 'rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right 'hand of God, who also maketh intercession.' Thus justice, instead of barring our way to the holiest, becomes our friend, and casts open the door of access to us; for God is just, when he is 'the justifier of them 'that believe in Jesus.'

As for the holiness of God, that seems to stand as an insuperable bar in our way of entering into the holiest, 'by reason of the blot, defilement, and pollution of sin, which renders us utterly loathsome in the sight of the holy One of Israel. But glory to God in the highest, this bar is also removed by the blood of Jesus; for that moment a sinner comes under the covert of this blood, and draws near to God under this covering, he hath his heart thereby 'sprinkled from 'an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure 'water.' That same moment that the righteousness of the second Adam is extended to us for justification, his Spirit enters into us for sanctification, renewing



us in the whole man, after the image of God. And the blood of Jesus not only cancels the guilt of sin, which made us obnoxious to the law and justice of God: but it hides and covers the filth of sin, from the eyes of immaculate holiness. Yea, holiness is so much the sinner's friend, in drawing near through the blood of Jesus, that this attribute of the divine nature is pawned in the promise of acceptance made to Christ and his seed, Psal. lxxxix. 2. 35. On which account I may exhort all true believers, in the words of the Psalmist, Psal. xxx. 4. 'Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.' Thus then, I say, all impediments and bars on God's part, that might hinder our access into the holiest, are removed by the blood of Jesus: and therefore, 'let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.'

As for impediments on our part, they may be more particularly spoken to in the application. I shall only say at the time, that the sum-total of them all amounts to this, that we are sinners, and so wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, that we cannot think that ever God will receive or welcome us. But at once to roll away this impediment, that this new and living way of access into the holiest, is only calculate for sinners: 'Christ calls not the righteous,' or innocent, 'but sinners,' to enter by him, as the way to the Father. If you were not sinners, but righteous, as Adam was before the fall, you would not need to enter 'by the blood of Jesus.' But seeing the way and door to the holiest is just shaped and calculated for the sinner, let not the sinner scare to enter by it into the presence of God; especially when he calls us, who  
are

are sinners, to 'draw near with a true heart, in full 'assurance of faith.' Faithful is he that hath promised acceptance in the beloved.

## C H A P. VI.

*Containing the APPLICATION of the preceding doctrine.*

**I** Proceed now to wind up the whole of this discourse in some practical improvement thereof; which I shall endeavour to manage, as briefly as I can, in the few following inferences.

*Inf. 1.* From what has been said, we may see, that there is a mystery in believing, which the world does not understand, yea, which none can know without 'that Spirit which is of God, whereby we know the 'things that are freely given to us of God.' The apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 9. speaks of the 'mystery of faith.' And indeed every thing about it is a mystery. The way of its production, or how it is wrought in the soul, by the power of the eternal Spirit, is a mystery: 'Who can tell how the bones are formed in the 'womb of her that is with child?' far less are we capable to account for the way and manner of the Spirit's operation in forming and creating us in Christ Jesus by faith. Hence is that of Christ to Nicodemus, John iii. 8. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst 'not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: 'so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' How the Spirit of God drops into the heart the incorruptible

tible seed of his own word, and impregnates it there, so as to turn it, though in itself but a dead letter, into a living principle, purifying the heart, debasing self, and carrying the soul directly into Christ for all, is a mystery which we cannot comprehend or account for. And then the object of faith is a great mystery. God, the ultimate object of it, is an awful mystery: 'Who can by searching find him out,' either in his essence, operations, or manner of his existence, one in three, and three in one? Christ, the more immediate object of faith, is a great mystery, an incarnate Deity: 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.' The gospel-covenant, by which we believe in Christ, is a 'mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints.' And lastly the actings of faith upon its objects is a great mystery: how the poor believer on earth can receive Christ in heaven at the right hand of God: how he applies him as his own Saviour, his own prophet, priest, and king, upon the indefinite grant that is made of him in the new covenant, where the man is neither designed by name or surname: how faith makes use of Christ and his fulness, with as great freedom as a man makes use of meat and drink that is set before him; on which account it is said to 'eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man:' how it puts on the righteousness of Christ, and glories in the obedience of another, as though the man had fulfilled the law in his own person: how it draws forth the fulness of the Godhead, dwelling bodily in Christ, and thus fills the soul with the 'fulness of God:' how it will take a bare word, dropping from God's

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mouth, and rejoice in it as one that findeth great spoils: how it will take this word, and draw near to him in the new and living way, with full assurance of acceptance. These things are mysteries which flesh and blood cannot reveal: and yet to every true believer it is given, in less or more, to know these mysteries of the kingdom.

*Inf. 2.* From this doctrine we may see the excellency of the grace of faith. When it takes a view of the 'blood of Jesus,' of the 'new and living way,' and of the 'high priest over the house of God,' it can draw near to the holiest with full assurance of welcome. And it is not without warrant that faith promises itself welcome from the Lord in its approaches to him thro' Christ; God has made the same, yea, much greater grant to the grace of faith, as Ahasuerus made unto Esther, chap. ix. 12. 'What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request? and it shall be done.' Compare this with John xiv. 13, 14. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.' So Mark xi. 24. 'What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' As Ahasuerus put a peculiar honour upon Esther, and preferred her above all the maids in his kingdom: so God, the King of kings, stamps a peculiar honour and excellency upon the grace of faith; preferring it above all the other graces; on which account it may say with Mary, Luke i. 48. 'He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.' Though God be high, yet hath he a respect unto the lowly: though he be the high and lofty One that inhabiteth

biteth eternity, yet he dwells with the humble: he delights to choose, and put honour upon the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of this world, yea, he chooses 'things which are not, to bring to nought 'things that are.' Faith is the meanest and lowest, the poorest and most beggarly of all the other graces; for all the other graces they give something unto God, whereas faith, like a mere beggar, comes not to give any thing, but to get and receive all: and yet God takes this beggar, and sets it among princes, to allude unto that expression, Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. Such honour and preferment does God put upon this grace, that though he has said, 'He will not give his glory to another;' yet so little jealousy has he of the grace of faith, that he, as it were, sets it upon the throne with himself, ascribing things to it, which are proper and peculiar to himself only: he sets the jewels of his crown upon the head of faith. The salvation of a lost sinner is God's prerogative, he alone is 'the God of 'salvation, to whom belong the issues from death;' and yet we find this attributed unto the grace of faith, 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' says Christ; 'go in 'peace.' Justification is peculiar unto God only, 'It is God that justifieth,' says the apostle; and yet the same apostle ascribes the justification of a sinner unto faith, 'A man is justified by faith without the 'deeds of the law.' God alone is 'the Lord of life,' who 'kills, and makes alive;' and yet life is ascribed unto faith, 'The just shall live by his faith.' Omnipotency is God's peculiar prerogative, he is 'the Almighty;' and yet there is almightiness attributed unto faith, 'All things are possible to him that believeth. If we 'have faith as a grain of mustard-seed,'

‘ feed,’ we ‘ may say unto this’ and the other ‘ moun-  
‘ tain, Be thou removed, and it shall be done.’ If  
we read the xith of the Hebrews, we shall find things  
ascribed to faith, which nothing but Omnipotency it-  
self could effect, such as ‘ the stopping the mouths of  
‘ lions, quenching the violence of fire, raising the  
‘ dead,’ and the like. Now, would you know why  
God doth thus attribute works and perfections to faith,  
which are proper to himself alone ? The plain reason  
is, because faith is such a low, mean, self-denied  
grace, that it is just the genius and nature of it to  
exclude self, yea, to exclude itself, to glory in the  
Lord alone, and to give him the glory due unto his  
name, saying, ‘ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,  
‘ but unto thy name’ be the ‘ glory.’ Does faith save  
us ? Yes it does : but then it turns the glory of sal-  
vation over upon the author thereof, saying, ‘ Our  
‘ God is the God of salvation.’ Does the just man  
live by faith ? Yes : but then faith steps in with ‘ It is  
‘ not I.’ Gal. ii. 20. ‘ I live ; yet not I, but Christ  
‘ liveth in me.’ Does faith justify ? Yea, it doth :  
but then its language is, ‘ Surely in the Lord have I  
‘ righteousness, in him’ will I ‘ be justified, and in  
‘ him’ alone will I ‘ glory.’ Can faith do every  
thing ? Yea, but it is by leaning on the arm of Om-  
nipotency, ‘ I can do all things through Christ which  
‘ strengtheneth me.’ Thus, I say, faith, it arrogates  
and claims nothing to itself, but gives unto the Lord  
the glory due unto his name. And so zealous is faith  
to have God alone exalted, particularly the freedom  
of his grace in the justification and salvation of a sin-  
ner, that, though believing be the highest and great-  
est act of obedience that a person can yield unto the  
moral



moral law, yet, that boasting may be for ever excluded, it excludes and shuts out itself from the rank and category of works, or acts of obedience, Rom. iv. 5. 'To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith' (objectively considered) 'is counted for righteousness.' It is the peculiar excellency of faith, that it sinks its own act, that its blessed object, CHRIST, may be 'all in all;' it 'rejoices in Christ Jesus,' and 'triumphs always in him.' And though, as I was saying, it be the poorest, lowest, and most beggarly of all the other graces; yet it is a grace that prides itself in the Lord Jesus, and by his blood enters with boldness into the holiest.

*Inf.* 3. If it be the will of God, that we should draw near with full assurance of faith; hence I infer, that unbelief, whether reigning in the wicked, or remaining in the saints, cannot shun to be most displeasing and offensive unto him.

1. I say, reigning unbelief in the wicked is a flat contradiction to the will of God. The man under the power of unbelief, instead of drawing near with the assurance of faith, departs from him, through a distrust and jealousy of his grace, power, and veracity. Solomon tells us, Prov. vi. 34. 'Jealousy is the rage of a man.' If we shall entertain and express a jealousy of him, we in effect call him a liar. And if man who is vanity, and the son of man who is a lie, reckon it such an indignity to have their veracity or kindness called in question; how much more is it an indignity done to him, for whom it is impossible to lie? O Sirs! unbelief offers the most signal affront to a God of truth, that is possible for a creature to do.

God, as you were hearing, to encourage our faith and confidence toward him, has given all the securities which he could possibly grant; yea, the most jealous heart in the world could not ask better security from the most treacherous person on earth, than God has granted in his word: for though his bare word of promise be enough to command faith from all mankind, yet, beside his word, he has given his writ; beside his writ, he has given his sacred oath; beside his oath, he has given a surety; beside a surety, he has appended solemn seals, and ratified all by the joint testimony of the three that bear record in heaven, Father, Word, and Spirit. Now, after all these securities, to entertain a jealousy of him, as if he were not faithful to his promise of welcome and acceptance in the beloved, what else is this but to make him a liar? Faithfulness and truth are 'the girdle of his loins and 'reins;' but unbelief does its utmost to strip him of his girdle, charging him with treachery and unfaithfulness. You would reckon it an imputation of a very high and horrid nature, for any man to charge you with blasphemy against God; and yet I will be bold to say, every unbeliever is a blasphemer of God. Why, can there be greater blasphemy under heaven, than to make God a liar? It is indeed most certain, that God will be found true, and every man a liar: but yet the unbeliever does his uttermost to make him a liar, by refusing credit to his word. And, after all, is it any wonder though a holy and jealous God be so enraged against the sin of unbelief, as to declare, that 'he who believeth not, is condemned already,' and 'the wrath of God abideth on him?' Believe it, Sirs, if you continue to blaspheme God by your unbelief

belief here, you shall have time to blaspheme him in hell with devils and damned spirits, through the endless ages of eternity: John viii. 24. 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.' John xv. 22. 'If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.'

2. This doctrine not only condemns the reigning unbelief of the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, but also the remaining unbelief of believers themselves. God knows how many unbelieving believers there are among us. There are very few believers, but are guilty of ten, if not twenty acts of unbelief, for one act of faith. O that I could shame even believers out of this unbelief! I shall only say, that your unbelief is much more unaccountable and inexcusable than the unbelief of other men: why? God has not only given you a ground of faith, as he has given others, but he has given you the grace of faith; and not to believe in that case, is a crime of a most black and aggravated nature. If a child who is sprung out of his parent's bowels, and who is the object of his most endeared affection, should call his father that begat him a liar, would not this give a more sensible wound to the parent's heart, than if he had been so treated by any other person? This is the very case with you, believers; God has taken you into his family, given you the name of sons and daughters, and he says to you in effect, as, Jer. iii. 4. 'Wilt thou not from henceforth cry unto me, "My Father?" Wilt thou not from henceforth draw near to me as a Father, and as your Father in Christ, with full assurance of faith? And yet, after all, to



call him a liar by your unbelief, and to say, that his promise fails for evermore, or that he has forgotten to be gracious; O what a deep wound may you think doth this give unto the heart of your heavenly Father! The provocations of sons and daughters, particularly this provocation of unbelief, touches him in the tenderest part.

You may readily ask, Wherein doth the unbelief of believers discover itself? I answer,

1<sup>st</sup>, It discovers itself in their frequent pleading the cause of unbelief, and that under the specious pretext of humility. O, will the man say, it would be too great a thing for the like of me to venture into the holiest; it would be presumption in me to draw near with full assurance of faith, asking peace and pardon, grace and glory; I dare not meddle with the gift of God, or take hold of his covenant; my fingers are too foul to touch such holy things. Here indeed is a fair mask and shew of humility. But, Sirs, it is nothing else than the devil of unbelief wrapped up in Samuel's mantle; it is a pleading the cause of unbelief, a refusing to obey the express command of God, under a pretence that you are not fit enough for believing, that you want this and that and the other qualification: and what is this but a tang of the old Adam, a tincture of the covenant of works? Whatever carnal reason may imagine, true faith, though it be the boldest, yet it is the most humble and self-emptying thing in the world; and the more of the boldness and assurance of faith, always the more humility. And the reason of this is plain, because faith in its dealings with God despises so much as to cast an eye upon any grace or qualification

tion in the soul itself, excepting it be its emptiness, misery, poverty, &c. and builds its whole confidence upon a ground without itself, namely, the noble qualifications of the great high priest over the house of God.

2dly, The unbelief of believers discovers itself in a faint, languid, and timorous way of believing, as if the ground they stand upon were not able to bear them. Much like a man walking upon weak ice, though he ventures his weight upon it, yet every moment he is afraid lest the ice break underneath him, and leave him in the deep. Just so is it with many believers, they venture upon Christ, upon his righteousness, and upon the faithfulness of God pawned in the promise, with a kind of erphing, as though they would fail underneath them, and leave them to perish for ever. And what else is this but unbelief, or a secret distrusting of the sufficiency of God's faithfulness, or of Christ's righteousness, to bear up the soul in its eternal concerns?

3dly, The unbelief of believers appears in their being too much addicted to a way of living by sense. Sense, unless it have the stock in its own hand, it does not reckon the promise of God worth a farthing; but faith, it rejoices in the promise as its subsistence even when sense is out of doors. The believer who lives by sense, he will not believe the promise, or credit the veracity of the promiser, unless he be hired and bribed with sensible consolation and manifestations; much like Thomas, John xx. 25. 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.' It is with

many believers, as it is with some unskilful swimmers, they will venture into the deep waters if you will undertake to bear their heads above, but not otherwise : but this is not true swimming ; true swimming is for a man to venture the weight of his body into the water, and by the strength of the water, and the waving of his hands and limbs, to bear himself up from sinking. So true believing is not for a man to trust God and his promise only when he is bore up with sensible consolations ; but for a man to rest, stay, and bear up his soul upon the bare promise of God, even when these props are withdrawn : it is to ‘ trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay ourselves upon him as our God,’ when we ‘ walk in darkness, and see no light.’

*Inf.* 4. This doctrine serves to discover what is the strength or stature of our faith ; for the expression of the apostle in the text, as was already hinted, plainly imports, that there are believers of different sizes in God’s family. Now, in enlarging this inference, there are two or three practical cases which I shall endeavour briefly to resolve.

1. What are the usual symptoms of a strong faith ?

2. What are the usual attendants of a weak faith ?

3. How may the reality of faith be known, though it were in the lowest or weakest degree ?

*Quest.* 1. What are the signs or evidence of a strong faith ?

*Ans.* 1. The more that the legality of the heart is overcome, the stronger is a man’s faith. Every man is naturally married to the law as a covenant ; and while



while there is any thing of nature in the believer, he will find a strong bias in his heart, turning him into the works of the law, as a ground of acceptance before God. And O how easily and insensible do our spirits glide into this old covenant-channel, imagining that God accepts of us the better, on the score of our inherent holiness, or external acts of obedience! Now, I say, the more that this bias of the heart is conquered, the stronger is our faith. A vigorous and lively faith it overlooks all graces, duties, attainments, and experiences, as grounds of acceptance; and founds its confidence allenarly upon the blood of Jesus, the merit and mediation of the great high priest over the house of God, by virtue of the covenant of grace, and free promise of acceptance in him. The strong believer casts out the bond-woman, and her seed of legal works and doings, owning himself only a son of the free-woman, an heir of the promise of grace and glory, through Christ and his imputed righteousness. Upon this rock he drops his anchor; upon this foundation he builds his hope, disclaiming his goodness as a thing that extendeth not to the Lord, accounting his own righteousness, whether legal or evangelical, before or after conversion, as 'loss and dung, 'that he may be found in Christ, having the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ.' He will not take so much as a stone or little pinning of the works of the law, to help up the new fabric of grace; no, it shall be all grace from top to bottom, and through every part of it, and grace reigning through imputed righteousness alone: Eph. ii. 8. 9.

' By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not

' of yourselves : it is the gift of God : not of works, ' lest any man should boast.'

2. Strong faith will build its confidence, as to great matters, upon a naked word coming from the mouth of Christ, even though sense and reason, yea, the ordinary course of providence, be against it. This we see exemplified in the case of Abraham, formerly mentioned, Rom. iv. Though every thing seemed to make against him, yet ' he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.' Yea, strong faith will catch at the least hint of encouragement from the Lord, and build its assurance thereupon, as to the desired event: Matth. viii. 5. to 13. the centurion comes to Christ, in behalf of his servant, who was stricken with a palsy, and grievously tormented. Christ answers, verse 7. ' I will come and heal him.' Well, the man's faith fixes upon this simple word of promise, and is so much assured of the good-will, power, and faithfulness of the promiser, that he makes no more doubt of his servant's recovery, than if it were already done, being persuaded, that diseases and distempers were as much at Christ's beck, and much more, than his soldiers or servants were at his ; and that Christ's word of command could as effectually heal at a distance, as though he were present : whereupon, verse 18. we are told, that Jesus marvelled, saying, ' I have not found so great faith, no not ' in Israel.'

3. Strong faith is ordinarily attended with a firm and fixed resolution to hang on the Lord, till it get the errand it comes for ; and no supposable discouragements shall make it quit its gripe. Jacob

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was a strong believer, and, by the strength of his faith, 'he had power with God; yea, he had power 'over the angel, and prevailed.' We read, Gen. xxxii. after a long night's wrestling, the Lord says to him, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh:' Jacob answers, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' This, one would think, looked like rudeness and ill-manners in Jacob, to speak so to God: no, it was not rudeness, but only the resolution of his faith. Lord, might Jacob say, if thou ask my leave to go, I can by no means yield to it; let the day break and pass on, let night come, and the next day break again, lame Jacob, and the living God, shall never part, till I get the blessing: and his resolute faith like a prince prevailed. O let all the true seed of Jacob follow his example, and they shall be fed with the heritage of Jacob their father. The like instance we see in the Syrophenician woman, Matth. xv. 22—28. Her faith breaks through all discouragements, yea, improves seeming discouragements as arguments to fortify her suit; whereupon Christ at length answers, 'O woman, great is thy faith.' Strong faith will rather die upon the spot, than quit its gripe: 'Though he slay me,' (says Job), 'yet will I trust 'in him.'

4. Strong faith, though it may be troubled at the hiding of the Lord's countenance, yet it will not be cast down at every cloud, as though the Lord had forgotten to be gracious: no, it presently casts its eyes on the covenant, and reads love in God's words, when it cannot see them in his looks; saying with the church, in Mic. vii. 8. 9. Though 'I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto 'me:



‘ me:—he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.’ Why? He has said, and his word is sure, that ‘his goings forth are prepared,’ or secured, *as the* outgoings of the morning light, Hof. vi. 3. and therefore I no more doubt of the Lord’s return, than I doubt of the return of the sun in the morning, when he sets out of sight in the evening. However dark the night may be, yet the day will break, and the shadows will fly away: ‘Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ And as strong faith keeps up the heart from sinking under the clouds of desertion, temptation, and inward trouble; so it keeps the spirit of a man in an equal poize, under all the vicissitudes of time, so that ‘he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart’ being ‘fixed, trusting in the Lord. Although the fig tree should not blossom,’ &c. ‘yet will he rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation,’ Hab. iii. 17, 18. Heroic faith hath the moon of this world under its feet; it tramples upon all the changes of time, saying with the apostle, ‘I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,’ &c. However matters may be situate in the conduct of providence, yet a lively faith can see that there are no changes in God’s covenant, no change of his love or purpose of grace.

5. The more fruitful a person is in the exercise of other graces, the stronger is his faith. You know the plenty and bigness of the fruit of a tree flows from the abundance of sap and strength in the root: so here, faith is the radical grace, the root upon which the other graces grow; and therefore the more that  
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a person abound in love, hope, repentance, meekness, humility, and other graces, the more vigorous is his faith: for as the tree strikes its root into the ground, and from thence draws and sends a digested nourishment through the several branches, whereby they are made to blossom and bring forth; so faith unites the soul to Christ, through the word of grace, and fetches out sap and strength from that true olive, whereby the soul is made to *revive as the corn*, to *grow as the vine*, and *the scent and flavour thereof to be as the wine of Lebanon*.

The *second* question was, What are the usual attendants of a weak faith? An answer to this question may easily be deduced from what has been already suggested in answer to the former; a weak faith having the opposite symptoms of a strong. However, beside what may be gathered this way, I shall suggest the two particulars following.

1. Frequent doubting, staggering, and wavering of the heart, is a concomitant of weak faith. You know, there is a deal of smoke goes up from the fire, while it is weak, not thoroughly broken up; so the more of the smoke of unbelieving doubts, fears, and jealousies, there is the less faith. Hence doubting and believing are opposed, 'Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?' A staggering at the promise through unbelief is opposed to the strength of faith, Rom. iv. 20. - The word is borrowed from a man walking, whose feet through weakness hit one another, which makes him alter his pace, one step is quick, and another slow; so here, the way of weak faith is not equal. Perhaps, under a sensible enjoyment, he is this hour triumphing in his high places; but

but anon the enjoyment is withdrawn, and he alters his pace, and staggers through unbelief, saying, 'His promise fails for evermore; he hath forgotten to be gracious.'

2. The more hasty and impatient the soul is under delays, the weaker is its faith. This I gather from II. xxviii. 16. 'He that believeth, shall not make haste.' Weak faith is so hasty, that it will allow of no time to intervene betwixt the petition and its answer, betwixt the promise and the accomplishment: if the answer do not come presently, the man is ready to conclude, 'The Lord doth not hear, neither doth the God of Jacob regard.' But now, strong faith makes the soul to wait God's time and leisure, saying, 'I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.'

The *third* question was this, How may the truth and reality of faith be known, though it be in the weakest and lowest degree? I answer,

1. True faith, even in the weakest measure, will look on sin as an enemy, though it perhaps dare not lay claim to Christ as a friend. True faith is said to *purify the heart*, Acts xv. 9. It is a living principle in the soul, which is always opposing the motions of indwelling corruption. Although indeed sometimes, through the prevalency of sin, it cannot be discerned, more than the living spring at the bottom of the well when the waters are muddied; yet, like the living spring, it is always working out the mud and filth, till the waters be perfectly clear. Perhaps the soul is so far from perceiving any real grace, and actual  
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interest in Christ, that it can see nothing but Atheism, enmity, unbelief, ignorance, pride, and such vermine of hell crawling in every corner; and yet at the same time the living principle of faith at the bottom of the heart will be working and wrestling against these, sometimes by groans, 'Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!' sometimes by complaints, 'iniquities prevail against me:' sometimes by looks to heaven for relief, 'I know not what to do, but mine eyes are upon thee:' sometimes by cries to heaven, 'I am oppressed, undertake for me:' sometimes by breathing desires after more holiness, 'Create in me a clean heart; Let my heart be found in thy statutes; O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' By such things as these, the truth and reality of faith may be discovered, even in its weakest measure and degree.

2. True faith, though never so weak, will have a high estimate and valuation of Christ, and the habitual bent and bias of the soul will be toward him, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 'Unto you which believe he is precious.' Il. xxvi. 8. 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.' Weak faith perhaps dare not go the length of saying with the spouse, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his:' yet it will be often saying, O that he were mine! 'O that thou wert as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother!' And if it could get out its breath, it would even cry, 'Abba, Father; My Lord, and my God:' but it is, as it were, suppressed and smothered, when it would say so, with prevailing unbelief. Where true faith is, there is a void, emptiness, and restlessness of the soul, like the fish out of its element,  
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or a bone out of joint, till some view of Christ come, and then indeed it returns unto its rest. I remember, after the creation of Adam, God, caused all the creatures to pass before him; but among them all there was not found an help meet for him: there was something disagreeable and unsatisfying in all the inferior creatures; so that though he had them all at his command, yet still man was in a solitary condition, Gen. ii. 20. But so soon as ever the woman was presented to him, he says, verse 23. 'This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;' this indeed is a help meet for me. Just so is it with the soul in whom there is a principle of true faith: present riches, profits, pleasures, and all worldly contentments to him, he still finds something unsuitable and unfavoury in them all; but let Christ be revealed to him, immediately he cries out, O this is a help meet for me indeed! Is. xi. 10. 'To him shall the Gentiles seek, for his rest is glorious.' Psalm lxxiii. 25. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'

3. True faith, though in the lowest degree, will not rest there, but breathes after higher degrees of faith. Set the highest degree of faith before a weak believer, tell him of the faith of Abraham, how he believed without staggering; the man will indeed be humble under a sense of his shortcomings, and lament his own unbelief; yet, at the same time, he will find a breathing, and eager desire in his soul to win such a length of believing. Thus, like Paul, he 'forgets those things which are behind, and reacheth forth unto those things which are before,' &c. When the weak believer hears of the full assurance  
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of faith, his language is, 'Lord, help my unbelief; 'Lord, increase my faith.' I might tell you of many other evidences of faith in its truth and reality, though weak, as, that it works by love; it empties the soul, and humbles it; though the man cannot see himself great in God's eyes, yet he sees himself nothing in his own eyes; as he values Christ highly, so he values himself less than the least of all God's mercies. But I do not insist.

*Inf. 5.* Is it the will of God that we should draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith? then let us study to do the will of God in this matter. Seeing the *door* of the holiest is *open*, the *way* consecrated for us, and the *high priest* entered within the *vail*; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. I exhort you, not only to *believe*, but to be *strong in the faith*. Study to have a faith proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds of faith already mentioned.

But here a question will readily be moved, Is it the duty of all the hearers of the gospel, at first to believe after this manner, or to draw near with a full assurance of faith? For answer,

1. I grant, that the first approaches of a sinner to God in Christ by faith, are for the most part weak and feeble, attended with much fear and trembling, through the prevalency and strength of unbelief, a sense of utter unworthiness, and awful impressions of the glorious majesty of God; all which readily makes him, with the publican, to 'stand afar off, smiting on 'his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' But yet,

2. I affirm, that there is a sufficient ground laid,  
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in the gospel revelation and promise, for a sinner, even in his first approach to God in Christ, to come with full assurance of faith. This will evidently appear, if we consider, that by the glorious gospel, a wide door of access is cast open unto all without exception; all grounds of unbelief and distrust are removed, every bar and impediment which might make them to halt and hesitate is rolled away. This is given in commission to ministers, to 'prepare the way' of the people, to cast up, cast up the high-way, to 'gather out the stones,' and 'lift up a standard for the people,' Is. lxii. 10. When we call sinners to believe, we do not call them to come with a weak faith, or with a doubting, disputing faith; but we invite and call them to come with assurance of acceptance and welcome, grounded upon his infallible word of promise, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'

3. I find the Lord directing sinners, even in their first approaches, to draw near to him in Christ, with full assurance of faith, Jer. iii. 19. 'But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?' Here is a very puzzling question, such as none can answer but God himself. Well, but what is the answer which the Lord puts in the sinner's mouth? 'Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shalt not turn away from me.' The first breath of the Spirit of adoption is 'Abba, Father, Rom. viii. 15. a word of faith or confidence. Christ puts words of assurance in our mouths, teaching us, when we pray, to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' And every one apart is to say, 'My Father which art in heaven,'

heaven,' &c. Agreeable unto which is the direction given, Jam. i. 6. We are told, verse 5. that 'if any man (be he a faint, or a sinner) 'lack wisdom, 'let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, 'and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' Well, here is noble encouragement to all; but they who would speed well, are ordered to come in the full assurance of faith, verse 6. 'But let him ask in faith, 'nothing wavering,' &c.

4. I find sinners, in their first approaches, sometimes practising this direction, and coming with words of assurance, Jer. iii. 22. says the Lord, 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your 'backslidings.' And what is the first echo of faith unto this call? 'Behold, we come unto thee, for 'thou art the Lord our God.' So Zech. xiii. 9. 'I 'will say, It is my people;' there is the word of grace, and ground of faith: and the language of faith, correspondent thereunto, immediately follows, 'They 'shall say, The Lord is my God.' Is. xlv. 24. 'Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness 'and strength.' Besides all this, none, I think, can doubt, but it is the sinner's duty, at first, in obedience to the first commandment, to know and acknowledge the Lord as God, and as our God; and how this can be done but by believing, I cannot tell.

Well then, seeing there is such a door of faith opened to sinners in the gospel, let sinners enter in with boldness, and be saved; John x. 9. 'I 'am the door,' (says Christ): 'by me if any man 'enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, 'and find pasture.'

*Object.* 1. May the sinner say, How shall I adventure  
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to draw near with assurance of acceptance? I have such a burden of sin and guilt lying upon me, and it has such a prevalency and ascendant over me, that my confidence is quite marred: for my part, I may well say with David, Psalm xl. 12. 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.' To this I answer, (1.) By way of concession, that it is indeed impossible for a person, living in the love and practice of sin, to draw near to God with the confidence of faith; for in the very act of drawing near, the *heart* is *purified by faith*, in the blood of Jesus; or, as it is expressed in the latter clause of the text, he hath his 'heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water.' In believing we 'cease to do evil,' and 'learn to do well.' Faith, apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, turns the soul from sin unto God. So that it is as impossible for a person to draw near to God with the confidence of faith, while he lives in the love and practice of sin, as it is for a person to come to you, and go from you, at the same instant of time. While the heart is in league with sin, it is departing from the Lord: how then in this case can the sinner draw near to God? far less can he draw near with assurance of acceptance. There is a great difference betwixt iniquity *prevailing* in the heart and iniquity *regarded* in the heart. In the last case, a person cannot draw near with acceptance: Psalm lxvi. 18. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart: the Lord will not hear me.' Q. d. If I love it, or give it kindly harbour in my heart, God will not accept  
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of me, or my prayers; because in that case he could not draw near with a *true heart*, which is an inseparable concomitant of the assurance of faith. But in the former case, *viz.* of prevailing iniquity, it is not only possible, but actually preceded, for a person to draw near with the full assurance of faith; as we see in the instance of David, Psalm lxxv. 3. *Iniquities* (says he) *prevail against me.* But what follows? *As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* Now, this being the case pointed at in the objection, it ought to be no prejudice or hinderance to your drawing near unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus, with full assurance in the beloved. (2.) Whereas, O sinner, thou complains of a burden of sin and guilt lying upon thee, which mars thy confidence; I only ask, For whom, thinks thou, was the way to the holiest opened by the blood of Jesus? was it for the righteous, or for guilty sinners? An innocent or holy person needs no such way of access: it is only calculate and shapen for the guilty criminal and transgressor, such as thou art; and 'though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,' that moment thou enters by the blood of Jesus: and therefore, 'let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Whither can a guilty sinner go, but to the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin? Whither can a polluted sinner go, save to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness? (3.) The boldness and assurance of faith is not only consistent, but is always accompanied with a soul-abasing sense of utter unworthiness, because of the guilt, and filth, and power of sin. And the reason of this is plain,

plain, because, in believing, the man, through an uptaking of sin and guilt, is carried out of himself to seek his standing and the ground of his confidence in another, even in Christ, and the mercy of God in him. So David, Psal. cxxx. 3. 4. 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee: that thou mayst be feared,' &c. And therefore let a sense of sin in its guilt and prevalency carry thee out of thyself, to draw near by the blood of Jesus with full assurance of faith. It was a preposterous way of reasoning in Peter to say, *Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.* He should rather have said, Lord, come to me, for I am a sinful man; for where can a sinner be better than with the Saviour of sinners?

*Object.* 2. You call us to draw near with the assurance of faith; but, alas! how can I do this, seeing I am in the dark about my interest in Christ? If I knew that I had peace with God, my sin pardoned, my person accepted, and that I were in a state of grace and favour, in that case I could draw near with confidence indeed; but the case is quite otherwise, clouds and darkness are round about me, I doubt if ever God dealt with my heart effectually by his grace: how then can I draw near with the confidence of faith? *Ans.* If you never draw near to God with the assurance of faith, till you come to a sensible assurance of your interest in Christ, and of your being in a state of grace, you will never draw near to him in your life: and the reason of this is, because a sensible assurance of an interest in Christ, is the fruit and effect of the soul's drawing near by faith, and the effect can never go before its cause. The way to come at that assurance of  
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a state of grace, is to draw near with the assurance of faith, grounded, not upon any gracious promise of God in his word, and the mediation of the great high priest over the house of God: Heb. iv. 14. 16. 'Seeing we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,—let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,' &c. Faith (as I said just now) still seeks a ground of confidence, not in grace received, or any thing within the man, but only in Christ, and the gracious promise of acceptance through him: and therefore the best way in the world to win above all these doubts, fears, and perplexities anent your gracious state, is, by a direct act of faith, to go in to God by the new and living way, assuring and persuading your own souls, that a God of grace and love *bates putting away*. If. i. 10. He that 'walketh in darkness, and hath no light,' what course is he to take? 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.' Where, by the *name of the Lord*, we are to understand the grace and mercy, power and faithfulness of God, pawned in the promises of the covenant. Here we are to cast anchor; upon these we are to build the confidence and assurance of faith, when we have nothing to look or lippen to. Faith, both in its first act, and in its after-actings, fastens upon this name of the Lord; when at first it fetches the soul out of the darkness of a natural state, and when afterward, by its renewed actings, it brings the soul from under the dark and black clouds of desertion, temptation, and despondency, it still trusts in the name of God, as it is set in Christ, and set forth in the covenant, particularly the absolute promises thereof. And therefore,

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though indeed, in the duty of self-examination, we are to look inward for the marks and evidences of grace, in order to our arriving at an assurance of sense; yet, in the duty of believing, and in order to our coming at the assurance of faith, we must look wholly outward to the promise, and the name of God pledged therein. Thus did Abraham, the father of the faithful, Rom. iv. 20, 21.; and so must we, if we would be the true seed of Abraham.

*Object. 3.* You call sinners to believe, and to believe with an assured faith; but to what purpose is all this? may one say; faith is *the gift of God*, the work of his Spirit; I have no power to believe, till God work it in me: and therefore all this labour in persuading us to believe might be spared. I answer, Your own inability to believe, by any strength or power of yours, is so far from being an argument against, that it is one of the strongest arguments why you should believe: for when we call you to believe, we do not call you to work, or do any thing by your own power; but, because you have no power, to trust in the doings and strength of another, who, as he has wrought all your works *for you*, so engages himself by promise, to work all your works *in you*; and particularly, being *the author and finisher of faith*, is ready and willing to *fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power*. Every creature answers its name; and will God be wanting to answer his? No surely, the name that he takes to himself is declarative of his nature: and therefore, since he has taken this name to himself, of being the *author of faith*, and the *finisher* thereof, we may, with the greatest assurance of faith, *trust in this name of the Lord*, that he will  
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both begin the good work, and carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. And this very committing of the work of faith unto him, from a sense of your own inability, is that believing which we urge and call you to. Faith is a grace which just springs out of the ruin of all self-sufficiency and excellency; finding neither righteousness nor strength within, it looks abroad, and cries, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.*

Unbelief and carnal reason are ready to argue, Because God by his Spirit must do all, therefore we will sit still and do nothing. But the Spirit of God, whose reasonings I am sure are infinitely better, argues after a quite different manner, Phil. ii. 12, 13. 'Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' O what glorious encouragement is here for a poor impotent sinner to essay and mint at believing! Here is the arm of Omnipotency, reaching forth itself for thy help and thoroughbearing in the work he calls thee to. Up therefore and be doing, for *thy God commands thy strength*; and therefore let him be *the glory of thy strength*.

But, say you, seeing we cannot *work* the work of faith, why does he yet *command* it? Is it not a hardship to require of us what we have no ability to do? *Ans.* Why do you send your little children to school with the A, B, C, in their hands, before they can read one letter? You do not think it a hardship to put the book in their hand, and bid them read, though they know not a letter, because you offer to teach them yourself, or by another in your place. So here, we are commanded to *work the work of God*; which is to

*believe on him whom he hath sent; which yet is no hardship, notwithstanding of utter inability for it in ourselves, because, at the same time that he commands believing, he tells us, for our encouragement, that he himself is the author of faith, and is ready to work in us both to will and to do. If a master should command a servant to poize or lift a burden which he is not able to move, or to work a turn which he has no skill to manage; it might indeed discourage the servant from attempting it, if he were required to do it by his own strength or skill: but when the master tells him, I will assist, I will direct, I will do all, only put to thy hand; what servant would refuse or decline the service in this case? or if he should, do you not think he would deserve to be beaten with many stripes? The application is obvious: it is God's ordinary way to come and join with the poor soul, and enable it to believe, while, in obedience to his command, it is minding to believe in Christ. Like a kind master of a school, when the child, in obedience to him, takes the pen in his hand, and scribbles the best way he can, the master takes his hand in his, and leads and learns him to write; so when we take, as it were, the pen in our hand, and offer to write, at his command, he takes our hand in his, directing, strengthening, and enabling us to believe. So that, if there be but a willing mind to this work, it is accepted: where he gives to will, he will also give to do, of his good pleasure; these two are inseparably connected in the order of God's covenant.*

But you may still object, All the endeavours of a natural man are still but natural and sinful actions; and will ever God concur by his almighty power with the

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the acts or endeavours of nature? *Ans.* Although God be not obliged to concur with the endeavours of nature, yet such is his grace, love, and good-will toward man upon earth, such is the strength of his desire after our salvation, such pleasure has he in a sinner's believing, such a regard has he to what he himself has commanded, that we find him many times actually concurring with the poor helpless sinner, in his impotent mints at obedience to what he calls for. It was no gracious principle that moved Naaman the Syrian to go wash in the waters of Jordan; yet, because he did what was commanded, God was pleased to concur with the mean of his own appointment, and cured his leprous body; and, for ought I know, his soul also. Let us believe as we can, in obedience to God's command, and in a dependence upon his almighty power; and while we are doing so, although the act be at the beginning but natural, yet, in the very acting, promised and purchased grace strikes in, and turns it into a supernatural act of believing. As when Christ was about to work that famous miracle at Cana in Galilee, he does not first turn the water into wine; but he first bids them pour out the water, and, in pouring of it out, the water was changed into wine: so the loaves were multiplied while the disciples, in obedience to the command of Christ, were dividing them among the multitude. Just so here, while the poor soul, in a subordination to the divine power, and in obedience to the divine command, is attempting to believe, a God of grace changes the attempt into a true genuine faith; so that the soul, through the mighty power of God, ere ever it is aware, is brought really to believe, and that in a way it knows not how;

for ' the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

Thus, I say, in the very acting of faith we are enabled to act it; when we take the pen in our hand, God takes us by the hand, and writes for us, leading us in the *way we know not*. It is with us in believing many times, as in praying. The man goes to prayer with his heart as cold as the ice, and as hard as the nether millstone; he cannot open a mouth before the Lord, his tongue is tacked, his heart is locked up; but yet, while the poor soul is minting to pour out its heart into God's bosom, the Spirit of the Lord falls on him, even the Spirit of grace and supplication, whereby his bonds are loosed, and his soul made like the chariots of Amminadib. So while the poor soul is minting at believing, the Spirit of faith comes and concurs with it, exerting that exceeding great and mighty power which raised Christ from the dead, whereby he comes to be *filled with joy and peace in believing*.

Perhaps you may say, You urge us much to essay believing; but pray, give us your best advice how to manage in this matter. O that the Spirit of God may concur! There are these two or three things I offer, by way of advice, to you who are in good earnest: and O what man is there that has a soul to be saved, and who looks forward to a vast eternity of well or wo, that should not be in good earnest as to this matter!

1. My *first* advice then is this, Study to have your hearts well stored with all these considerations, which are fit fuel and matter whereby faith is ingenerated,

or begotten in the hearts of sinners. Although the act of saving faith be the effect of the divine power and grace; yet it is in the power of nature, by a common concurrence, to stock and store the mind with these things which are the seed of faith. The husbandman, though he cannot make one grain of corn to grow, yet he can plough and sow his ground; and when he has done his part, he leaves the seed under the clod, and looks up to heaven for the waterings of the former and latter rains: and accordingly God for ordinary crowns his endeavours with success, making the heavens to hear the earth, and the earth to hear the corn, whereby it brings forth ten, twenty, or an hundred fold. So here, let us do what is incumbent on us, and what we have power in an ordinary way to do; let us sow the seeds, I mean, let us store our minds with the pure and precious truths of God, and acquaint ourselves with these things which are to be believed, as they are laid before us in the holy oracles of the scriptures of truth; and having thus laid in the seed into the ground or soil of our hearts, let us look heavenward, and wait for a shower of the Spirit's influences, according to that word of grace or promise, Is. xlv. 3. 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.' You know, they that offered sacrifices of old, though they could not make fire come down from heaven to consume their sacrifices; yet they could fetch the bullock out of the stall, or the lamb out of the fold; they could bring it to the altar, and bind it with cords to the horns of the altar; they could gather their sticks, and lay in proper fuel; and having done their part, they looked up to heaven for the celestial fire to set all on a flame together. In



like manner, I say, do what is incumbent on you, gather your sticks, lay in the proper fuel of faith, store your minds with the materials of believing, which you are daily reading or hearing in the word. Study to impress your souls with the doctrines of your lost estate in the first Adam, and the way of your salvation by grace, in and through the second Adam Jesus Christ. Think upon the near approach that the high and lofty One has made to us in the person of his eternal Son, by his manifestation in our nature, when he passed by the nature of angels. O think on the excellency of his person, as he is Emmanuel, God-man, God with us, God on our side, to bruise the head of the old serpent, who had spoiled and ruined us. Think upon his suretyship and substitution in our room, how he was 'made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' how he was 'made a curse for us, that we might be redeemed from the curse;' how he was 'delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.' Think upon the fulness of grace and truth, of merit and Spirit, that is in him; and how all that fulness of grace that is laid up in him, is laid out to us in a covenant of grace and promise, and that promise or covenant left to us, and put in our hands, and we required to take hold of it, to make use of it in a way of believing. These are some of the materials of faith; faith comes by hearing of these things, and by thinking and meditating upon them: 'By these things do men live, and in all these things is the life of' our 'spirits,' Is. xxxviii. 16. And therefore revolve them in your minds, roll them like a sweet morsel under your tongues, think and think again upon them; and in thinking present them to  
your

your understanding, as things wherein your eternal state is concerned. You have as good ground to expect the concurring power of the Spirit of faith in this way and method, to fulfil in you the work of faith with power, as ever they of old had to look for the celestial fire to come down and consume their sacrifices, as a testimony of the divine acceptance, when they had, according to the command of God, done what was incumbent on them, in preparing their materials.

2. Another advice I give you is this, Study not only to gather these materials of faith, but to be fully persuaded of the truth and certainty of every thing that God has revealed in his word, especially of these things which relate more immediately to the mystery of salvation through Christ. We must needs believe the report of the gospel, and set our seal to the record of God in his word. Particularly, be fully persuaded that you are bankrupt, ruined and lost to all intents and purposes, by the breach of the first covenant, being under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the power of Satan; and that you have no more power to relieve yourselves out of this miserable condition, than the new-born infant cast out into the open field, Ezek. xvi. And in digging into this rock whence you were hewn, be not afraid to go to the bottom, I mean, to know the worst of yourselves; for true faith springs out of the ruin of self. Despair and self-loathing make way for a suitable prizing and improving of the blessed remedy. Want of necessaries at home, oblige men to go abroad, either to beg or buy where they may have them. The denial of self, in point of righteousness and strength, lands the soul in Christ, saying, *Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*

*ness and strength.* Again, study to be fully assured, that there is no help or relief for you out of your lost condition, but only by faith's acceptance and application of Christ, upon the warrant of God's word of grace; there is no coming to the Father but by him, no other name whereby men can be saved; every other door of access is barred and condemned since the fall. Be convinced of Christ's ability and sufficiency to save you from sin, and all its dismal train of miseries; he is a mighty Redeemer on whom God hath laid our help, able to save to the very uttermost. Be persuaded that he is a Saviour every way calculate and suited unto thy necessity, being made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and that his office as a Saviour, as well as his own promise, obliges him to save every one that comes to him in a way of believing: that everlasting life is yours, and you actually have it, that moment you receive him as the free gift of God; *He that hath the Son, hath life*: that there is no condition or qualification, no work or duty required in the word of God, in order to procure a right and title to eternal life; but that you are to come in upon Christ's title, who is the righteous heir, and who has made a disposition or assignation of his right to us in his testament, without any clogs or conditions. And if you adventure to make your works, duties, or any good thing in you, the condition of Christ's latter-will, you alter the will of the dead, you in effect destroy the freedom of a covenant of grace, and build up a partition wall between Christ and you, which you shall never be able to climb over.

3. Another advice I give you is this, Believe that it is your duty to believe, in obedience to the express command



command of God, with an eye to his promised Spirit. First view the grounds that your faith has to go upon, already spoken to; and then cast your eye upon the divine command and call, warranting, encouraging, and requiring you to venture upon these grounds; and so long as these are kept in view, there is no fear of presumption: how can it be presumption to obey the express command of Heaven? yea, the greatest command that ever was issued out to man from the throne of glory above, 1. John iii. 23. He speaks as if there were no other command in the word of God; because we fulfil the whole law as a covenant, in the very first act of believing, by renouncing our own, and submitting to the law-biding; and law-magnifying righteousness of the Son of God; and thereby our personal obedience also to the law as a rule, is set upon such a footing as to be accepted in the beloved: for, let us do what we will, we shall never please God, or be accepted of him, till we believe in the name of his Son, Heb. xi. 6. And therefore I say again, mint at believing, in obedience to the command of God. It is as much your duty to believe, as to obey any command of the moral law: and disobedience to this command of believing, will damn you eternally, yea, do it more effectually than murder, adultery, theft, or any other breach of the law that I can name. Pray tell me, Sirs, why do you ever bow a knee, or open a mouth to God in prayer? Do you set about this duty, because you have power and strength in yourselves to pierce heaven by your prayers, or to order your cause before God? No surely, but because God has commanded you to call upon him, therefore, powerless as you are, though you know not how to pray, or

what to pray for, yet you essay it. Now, why do you not the same in the case of believing, as in praying, since the one is commanded as well as the other? for I say, you have as little power in yourselves to pray aright, as to believe aright. There are many, who, as I was saying before, shift off the great duty of believing from day to day, under this pretext, that they want power to believe: but this is an objection that militates against all duties, as well as that of believing. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, as the apostle assures us; but will you, for this reason, desist from any essay to think upon what is good and beneficial to your souls? No, we try meditation, we mint to think on what is good, and in musing the fire burns; God comes in with the breathings of his Spirit, and then our meditations of him are sweet, and we are glad in the Lord. So, while the soul, from a sense of its lost estate, is minting to roll and rest itself on Christ, in obedience to the command of God, God comes in with his Spirit of faith, and fills us with joy and peace in believing.

4. Although you should not find any sensible concurrence of the power of God coming along with your mint at obedience to the command of believing, yet give it not over, but still continue the attempt: *Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.* *Object.* I have often attempted to believe, but yet I am as far from it as ever; the power of God does not come along; and therefore I may quite give it over. For answer, I refer you to a word, Heb. x. 36. 37. 'Ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and

‘and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.’ In trying to act faith in obedience to the divine command, ye have need of patience; for *he that believeth, doth not make haste*. You must resolve to believe, and wait, and wait, and believe, and never give it over: and when ye have done the will of God in this matter, as you can, you must hold on with them that have clean hands, even though you find no sensible influence concurring; for it is the command of God in his word, and not the influence of the Spirit, that is the rule and measure of your duty. And if you continue doing the will of God in this matter, with an eye to him who is the author and finisher of faith, you may assure yourselves, that ‘in a little while, he that shall ‘come will come, and will not tarry.’ It is the *will of God*, and the *work of God*, which thou art aiming at, even to *believe in him whom he hath sent*; and will not a God of grace and love, with whom compassions flow, put to his hand to his own work, and help a poor creature to do what is his own will? yea, surely, thou may be *confident of this very thing*, when he has passed his word for it, that he will ‘work in thee, both ‘to will and to do of his own good pleasure.’ There is nothing in all the world so pleasing to God, as to see a poor soul aiming to close with, and accept of his Christ: he is, as it were, pained at the heart, when sinners are backward to believe in his Son; and will he not then be forward to help a poor soul that is aiming at it? You know, an indulgent mother, when her breasts are full and swelled with milk, will be ready, not only to draw out her breast, but to help her poor infant toward it, when in want of milk, or minting to suck. Has a mother such compassion toward her  
sucking



sucking child ; and is there not infinitely more compassion with the Father of mercies toward a poor soul that is minting to suck the full breasts of his grace and mercy drawn out to all in a gospel-dispensation ? He whose bowels are sending out a sound after sinners in the gospel-call, will not be wanting to lend his helping hand to enable you to believe ; and therefore say with David, Psal. xlii. 5. ‘ Hope thou in God, ‘ for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.’

*Object.* I have tried believing so long and so often, that I am quite wearied, my strength is gone, and yet no power from above ; what shall I do ? God takes no notice of me. *Ans.* Is. xl. 27, 28: &c. ‘ Why sayst ‘ thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is ‘ hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over ‘ from my God ? Hast thou not known ? hast thou not ‘ heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is ‘ weary ? there is no searching of his understanding. ‘ He giveth power to the faint ; and to them that have ‘ no might, he increaseth strength.’ Thou imagines that God’s helping hand is withdrawn, and that he takes no notice of thy mints to believe. But why sayst thou so ? He is nearer than thou apprehends : Behold, he standeth behind our wall, ready to give grace, and mercy to help in time of need, ready to give power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might : and power from on high to believe is nearest, when we are most carried out of ourselves in point of strength and sufficiency. And therefore give it not over : *Wait, I say, on the Lord ; for they that wait upon him shall renew their strength.* It is only the weak man that

that will lean to the help of another: now, faith is a leaning on Christ when we cannot stand alone, Cant. viii. 5. 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' It is only the wearied man that will sit down and rest him: now, faith is the soul's resting in or upon Christ, Psal. xxxvii. 7. 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.' Heb. iv. 3. 'We which have believed do enter into rest.' When a man can do nothing else, when he is so feeble that he cannot put his hand to a turn, yet he can rest him: so here, because thou art weak, and without strength for any work of the law, therefore the Lord calls thee to rest thy weary, sinking soul upon the Lord Jesus, on whom he has laid thy help. And therefore let thy weakness encourage thee to revive, instead of discouraging thee.

But now, I come to offer a word of exhortation to those whose hearts do fall in with the foregoing exhortation. 'Do ye now believe,' though in the weakest degree? Let me exhort you not to rest in a low measure of faith, but press after the highest degree of it. Forget things behind; reach forth unto things that are before; believe better than ye yet have done. Go on from faith to faith, and thus learn to 'draw near with a true heart, in **FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH:**' and thus you shall be the children of faithful Abraham, who 'staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.' You see what was the ground of Abraham's faith, by which he believed without staggering; it was nothing else but the promise of life and salvation, through a Messiah to come. Well, you

you have the very same ground of faith laid before you, with a far greater advantage now under the New-Testament, namely, the promise of acceptance, peace, pardon, grace, and glory, through a Messiah who is already come, and finished the work which the Father gave him to do; and therefore believe without staggering, as he did.

That I may quicken you to press after a higher measure of faith, I offer the following considerations.

1. Little faith is not easily discerned; it is but like a grain of mustard seed lying in the ground, which one can scarce distinguish from the dust which lies under his feet; and when faith is not discerned, God loses the glory of his own grace, and you also lose the comfort of it.

2. The world we live in requires a strong faith. It is a den of lions, and a mountain of leopards; the roaring lion is going about seeking to devour: Red seas and Jordans of trouble lie in our way to Canaan, through the howling wilderness. Storms and tempests of persecution and tribulation may blow, which will make the strong believer to stagger and shake; and if so, has not the weak believer reason to fortify himself, by studying to believe better than he has done? for it is by faith that we stand in an evil day.

3. Contentment with little faith, is no good sign of the reality of faith; for (as was hinted before) it is of the nature of true grace, to breathe after its own perfection. They who have the least degree of it, press after the highest. They that know the Lord, follow on to know him.

4. Consider the advantages of a strong faith, beyond a weak. 1<sup>st</sup>, A strong faith hath a firm and solid



solid peace coming along with it: Is. xxvi. 3. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.' But weak faith has its peace disturbed at every turn of providence. 2dly, Strong faith brings great joy with it; hence we are said to be 'filled with joy and peace in believing;' yea, the joy of a lively faith is a 'joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' 1 Pet. i. 8. But now the weak believer, though he may perhaps sometimes be filled with the joy of sense, yet he has but little of the joy of believing. Hence it is, that whenever sense is withdrawn, he is in the very suburbs of hell, crying, 'The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, his promise fails for evermore.' 3dly, Strong faith is more steady in a storm, than a weak faith is. Strong faith, when the storm blows, casts out the anchor of hope, and rides in safety, crying, 'I will not be afraid though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, and though the waters thereof roar.' But now, weak faith, like Peter walking on the waters, is ready at every billow to cry out, 'Master, I perish,' When created comforts fail, when the fields yield no increase, weak faith is ready to say, I and my family will perish: but strong faith will say, Up the heart, there is no fear, 'My bread shall be given me, my waters shall be sure;' because a God of truth hath said it, whose is the 'earth, and the fulness thereof.' He that 'feeds the ravens,' will not let his children starve; he that 'clothes the lilies,' will not let me go naked. 4thly, Strong faith has more confidence and boldness in entering into the holiest, more moyen and interest in heaven, than weak faith has, John xiv. 13, 14. Mark xi. 24. Jam. i. 6. Weak faith, although

though God will not reject its suits, yet its returns are not so clear and full: yea, I will adventure to say, that unbelieving doubts, and fears, and jealousies, mar the success of many a good petition. 5thly, Strong faith makes the approaches of death more easy than they are to the weak believer. Strong faith takes up the telescope of the promise, and looks beyond death, to the land afar off, and rejoiceth in the hope of the glory of God, saying as the head of Christ did, Psal. xvi. 9. 'My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope:' for he hath 'shewed me the path of life,' the new and living way to these 'rivers of pleasures,' and that 'fulness of joy' which are 'at God's right hand for evermore.' Strong faith viewing an exalted Redeemer, it sees death and hell among the trophies of his victory, and thereupon triumphs over it as a vanquished and slain enemy, saying, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Lord.' But now weak faith shivers and trembles at the approaches of death, lest it should be swallowed up in the swellings of that Jordan. Let these considerations, I say, quicken you to breathe after the increase of your weak faith, that you may draw near with full assurance of faith.

I conclude this whole discourse with a word, 1. Of encouragement; 2. Of advice, to weak believers: for our glorious Master has commanded us to 'strengthen the weak hands,' to 'confirm the feeble knees;' and to 'say to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not.'

1. A word of comfort and encouragement to the poor tender lambs and weaklings in God's flock, who are frequently halting and staggering through the prevalency of unbelief.

1<sup>st</sup>, Know for thy comfort, that the weakest believer is as nearly related to God as a Father, as the strongest believer is. The weakest and youngest babe in a family, is as sib to the father as the first-born, or the son who is come to his full strength and stature. Every branch of a tree is not alike strong or big, and yet the tenderest twig is as really united to the root, and as really partakes of the sap of the root, as the strongest and most principal branch. So here, the weakest believer is in Christ, and partakes of his Spirit, as well as the strongest.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The weak believer is clothed with the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, and is as much justified thereby as the strongest. Our great high priest is clothed with a garment down to his feet, whereby every member of his body mystical is equally covered. It is equally true of every believer, that 'there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1.

3<sup>dly</sup>, The least and weakest degree of faith shall hold out to the end. They are all 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax: where the good work is begun, his faithfulness is engaged to carry it on to the day of Christ. The weakest degree of faith has glory and salvation knit to it by God's promise, as well as the strongest: it is not, 'He that believes' strongly, 'shall be saved;' but, 'He



‘He that believes’ indefinitely, whether his faith be weak or strong.

4thly, Our blessed Redeemer for ordinary vents his affection in a more tender and sensible manner toward weak believers, than toward the strong. The good Shepherd of Israel, he ‘carries the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads them that are with young.’ Hence it comes, that weak believers have commonly more sensible ravishing joys and consolations than strong believers. Much like a wife and affectionate parent, who will take his young infant on his knee, dandle it, and hug it in his bosom, while he will not allow his affections to run out after such a manner toward his son of age and stature, for that were to make a fool of him.

May the poor weak believer say, These are strong consolations indeed, if I might lay claim unto them; but that is what I still fear, that I have no faith at all, no, not like a grain of mustard seed. Beside what was said to this in the former part of the discourse, I shall only ask these two questions. (1.) Does not thy heart throb and faint within thee, when thou thinks of a parting with the Lord Jesus? If so, this says that his love is shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost, and consequently a root and principle of faith, from whence it flows, cleaving to the Lord like the iron touched with the loadstone. And I tell thee good news, that as thou hates to be put away from him, so ‘he hates putting away;’ and therefore there shall never be a separation. (2.) Does thou not find a restlessness in thy spirit, an uneasiness in thy bosom, when the Lord withdraws, like a bone out of joint, or a fish out of its element? If so, the root of faith is within;

Christ

Christ has been with thee in a way of grace and love, otherwise thou couldst not distinguish between absence and presence. And if ever Christ made thee a visit, his first visit shall not be his last; for 'his goings forth are prepared,' or secured, 'like the morning.'

2. I come to shut up all with a few advices to weak believers, in order to the increase of their faith toward a full assurance.

1<sup>st</sup>, Be humbled under a sense of remaining unbelief, and the weakness of your faith; for 'the Lord giveth grace,' and 'more grace, to the humble.' The more that self is pulled down, the higher is Christ exalted in a way of believing.

2<sup>dly</sup>, Be greedy of more faith. Covetousness in other things of this world is idolatry: but this is among the best things which you are allowed earnestly to covet; and the more you covet and desire of the Spirit of faith, the more you shall get; for 'he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.'

3<sup>dly</sup>, Be well acquainted with the grounds of faith as they are laid in the gospel-revelation, some of which I have pointed at in the preceding discourse. I am persuaded, that one great reason why so many do not believe at all, and why the faith of many real believers remains so weak, is their unacquaintedness with the strong and sure grounds that their faith has to build upon. Weak timorous believers, fixed upon the foundation God has laid in Zion, are just like a man standing upon a firm immoveable rock, his head turns giddy, and he imagines the rock is turning upside down

down with him, while the failure is not in the rock, but in his own head. Our faith fails us through our unacquaintedness with the stability of God's covenant and promise. And therefore, I say, study to be better acquainted with the promise and faithfulness, power and love of the promiser.

*4thly*, If you would have weak faith increased and strengthened, then be frequently exercising any weak faith you have; for gracious as well as natural habits are increased and improved by repeated acts: 'To him that hath,' and improveth well what he hath, 'shall be given.' This is the way to have your mite turned into a talent; and your talent of faith, by frequent exercise, shall in due time become as ten talents.

*5thly*, When you get any sensible experiences of the Lord's love, improve them, not as the grounds of your faith, but as encouragements to go on in trusting and believing, upon the grounds of faith laid before you in the word. These sensible tastes of the Lord's loving-kindness are given you, not that you should dote upon the sweetness of them, but to encourage and further you in trusting and believing: Psal. xxxvi. 7. 'How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.' It is a common fault among many believers in our day, when they find any thing of sensible presence, then indeed they rejoice, and they have good reason so to do; but no sooner doth a cloud come, but their faith as well as their joy evanishes, and they have as little trust to put in the word and promise of the God of their life, when his back is turned, or he out of their sight, as though they had never received a kindness at his hand.

And



And this is a reason, I am convinced, why it fares so ill with many of us at this day: and therefore let us amend it. And what comfort and joy we find in his presence, let it encourage and engage us to trust, and hope, and wait, and believe in him, when absent to our sense. And if we thus improve the marks of grace, and consolations of his Spirit, the joy of the Lord shall be our strength; and our path shall be indeed 'as the path of the just,' and 'as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

F I N I S.

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